

MEMOIRS
OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Volume XVII
SECOND MEMOIR

WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1924

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.

Volume XVII.
SECOND MEMOIR.

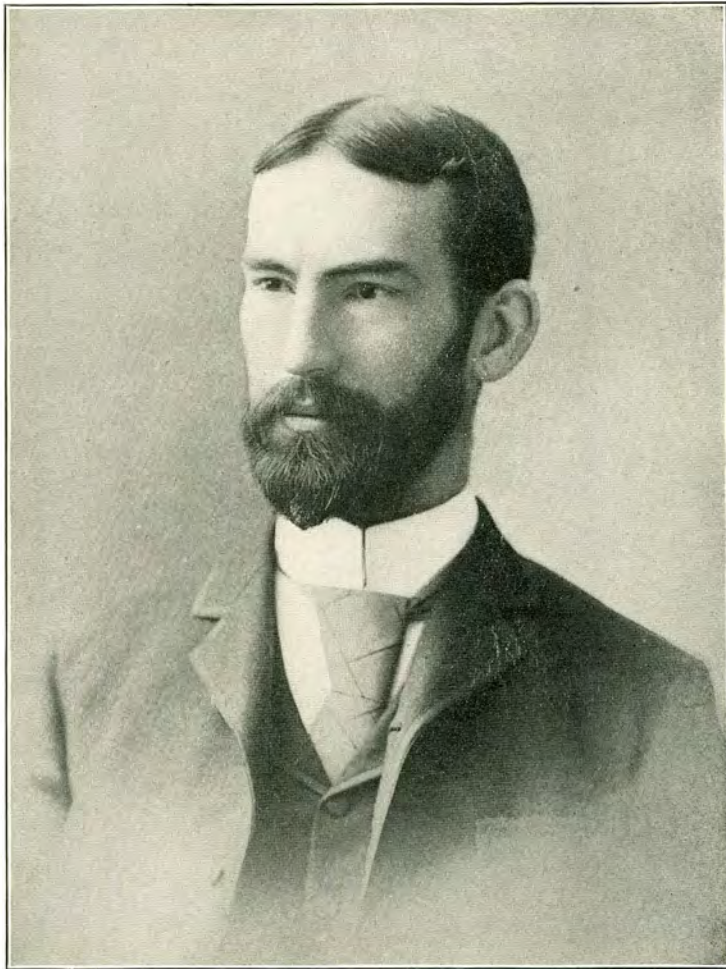
BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR RICHMOND MAYO-SMITH

1854-1901.

BY

E. R. SELIGMAN.

PRESENTED TO THE ACADEMY AT THE AUTUMN MEETING, 1919.



James truly
Richmond W. Smith

RICHMOND MAYO-SMITH.

1854—1901.

By E. R. SELIGMAN.

Richmond Mayo-Smith, son of Preserved and Lucy (Mayo) Smith, was born in Troy, Ohio, February 9, 1854. His father was a native of Massachusetts, son of the Rev. Preserved Smith, pastor of the church in Warwick, of that State. His mother was the daughter of Seth Mayo, of Medford, Mass.

On his father's side he was descended from the Rev. Henry Smith who came from England in 1636 and became the first pastor of Wethersfield, Conn., at which place he died in 1648. His son Samuel was one of the first settlers of Northampton, Mass., afterwards removing to Hadley. Three generations later Chileab Smith removed to the then newly settled town of Ashfield. His grandson, Preserved Smith, served in the Continental Army, afterwards studied at Brown University, and then entered the ministry. The greater part of his life he was pastor of the church at Rowe, Mass. The next Preserved Smith also graduated at Brown University and was pastor of the church at Warwick. His oldest son was Preserved Smith, father of Prof. Mayo-Smith, who went to Ohio in 1839, and engaged in business, first at Troy and afterwards at Dayton. He became a manufacturer of cars and a railroad man, being one of the group which built the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railroad. Barney & Smith was, and is, the name of his car factory, and has a plant over a mile long. He was famous in Ohio for his benefactions. Lane Seminary of Cincinnati received over \$100,000 from him, which was a much larger sum in those days than in these days of great gifts.

Prof. Mayo-Smith's mother, Lucy Mayo, was descended from the Rev. John Mayo, first settled pastor of the Second Church of Boston, which he served from 1655 to 1672. His colleague and successor was the celebrated Increase Mather who testified that Mr. Mayo was "a blessing to his people."

Richmond was the fourth son of his parents and received the name of his grandmother who was Beebe Richmond of Providence, and of his mother, a Mayo as aforesaid. When he was 2 years old the family removed to Dayton and here he attended the public schools (district and high school) and was thus prepared for college. Graduating from the high school in 1871 he entered Amherst College in the same year, completing his course in 1875.

Of his early life there is little to write. The family consisted of three sons, two older than Richmond, and one daughter, younger. One son had died in infancy. The New England traditions were upheld, family government being firm, but not harsh. Dayton was a town of 20,000 people in 1856 but grew rapidly in the next decade. Still the simple life was the rule. The public schools were probably as good as the average. Ohio in fact had early organized a good system of public instruction. Life was uneventful except for the period of the Civil War, and a boy of 8 to 12 years old could hardly appreciate the full significance of that struggle though doubtless he cheered for the soldiers and for the Union. His father had been a member of the Republican Party from its first organization and the sympathy of the sons was assured throughout the conflict. At school Richmond stood well and was what we may call a thoughtful boy though not precocious. He came quite naturally into the New School Presbyterian Church of which his parents were members.

At Amherst College Richmond had the reputation, which he always kept, of being extremely level headed and full of common sense. As one of his classmate, who has since risen to dis-

tion, writes, he was one of the old reliables, efficient in whatever he undertook and faithful to the last degree. As his father was a prominent car manufacturer, the natural inference was that young Richmond would enter the same business, but his interest in history and economics, under the inspiration of Prof. John W. Burgess, led him into other paths. At the instigation of Prof. Burgess, he went to Europe, after graduating from Amherst in 1875, and spent two years at the universities of Berlin and Heidelberg, prosecuting his studies in economics and social science. In 1877 he was called to Columbia as instructor in history and political science, in 1878 he was made adjunct professor of political economy and social science, and finally, in 1883, he was promoted to the full professorship in the same department. When the School of Political Science was organized in 1880, he became one of the five original instructors, retaining at the same time his seat in the faculty of the School of Arts, as the college was then called. At the time of the reorganization of the university and the inception of the Council in 1890 he was made a member of that body, and continued as the elected delegate of the faculty of Political Science up to the beginning of 1901.

So much for the bare facts of his lifelong connection with Columbia. To form an estimate of his real influence it will be necessary to consider him in the threefold aspects of scholar, teacher, and citizen.

As a scholar Prof. Mayo-Smith had acquired a position of high rank among the economists of the country. He made numerous contributions to the scientific periodicals of America and England, and wrote occasionally for foreign publications like the German Verein für Socialpolitik. He was one of the original board of editors of the Political Science Quarterly in 1886, and almost every volume contained an article on some economic topic from his pen; he was one of the founders of the American Economic Association, and always took a deep interest in its welfare, attending its meetings regularly and almost invariably contributing a paper or taking a leading part in the discussion. His writings on economics proper covered a wide range of topics. Although he published only one volume on a special subject—the book on "Immigration and Emigration," which still remains the model of its kind—his articles and especially his numerous reviews of new books showed that he possessed a firm grasp on the fundamental principles of the science. As an economist his chief characteristics were thoroughness, unquestioned accuracy, open-mindedness, clearness of thought and expression, and a rare sanity of judgment.

It was, however, in the allied field of statistics—which has of recent years successfully vindicated its claim to be considered a coordinate if not an independent science—that Prof. Mayo-Smith won his greatest triumphs. He was indisputably the foremost American scientific statistician. From the very outset of his professional career he appreciated the fundamental importance of sound statistical methods in American public life, and he resolved to bend his utmost energies to the task of placing American statistics on a thoroughly scientific basis. His course on statistics was the first given in any American university, and for a long time remained the only one. His publications on the subject soon began to attract the attention of practical statisticians and won for him the admiration and friendship of such men as President Francis A. Walker and Carroll D. Wright. He became one of the founders of the rejuvenated American Statistical Association and before long was elected its vice president, a position which he still occupied at the time of his death. His reputation at home had now spread to such an extent that he was made a member of the National Academy of Sciences, a rare distinction at a time when the academy was in such doubt as to whether economics or statistics was a real science that it numbered only a single representative of those disciplines among its members. Shortly afterwards he was elected to the International Statistical Institute, which then had only half a dozen members in America. From this period date his wider international reputation and the beginnings of his warm friendship with such eminent scholars as Bodio of Italy, Levasseur of France, and Craige and Edgeworth of England. He attended several of the European meetings of the institute, notably those of Berne, Paris, and St. Petersburg, and contributed occasionally to its Bulletin. The two volumes in which he summed up a part

of his conclusions—"Statistics and Sociology" and "Statistics and Economics"—immediately won a place as the authoritative works on the subject, and have been largely used as textbooks throughout this country.

The characteristics of Prof. Mayo-Smith as an economist stood him in good stead as a statistician. His sobriety of judgment led him to point out the limitations of the statistical method as well as the dangers which encompassed the subject; and his lucidity of thought and expression enabled him to invest with interest what to the average man seemed the driest part of the "dismal science." As a scientific statistician he was without a peer in America and his reputation attracted not a few students to the School of Political Science.

This leads us naturally to consider him in the next place as a teacher. It is rare to find a man who is at once a creative scholar and a successful undergraduate teacher. Prof. Mayo-Smith combined these characteristics. From the very outset he was occupied in teaching economics to undergraduates, and although the conditions of those early years, almost a half century ago, compelled him to emphasize the needs of a broader university development he retained to the last his warm interest in the college and its undergraduates. The instruction of the juniors remained in whole or in part in his hands, and his senior course was always with one exception the most popular of all the classes in history and political science and among the three or four largest electives in the whole institution. Numerous are the graduates of the college who continued with him the pleasant associations and the friendships formed during their undergraduate life. As a college instructor he was unusually conscientious, eminently fair, and uniformly courteous.

As a university lecturer, dealing primarily with graduates, he was no less successful. The interest which he instilled into his auditors in his lectures and especially in his seminar may be recognized from the fact that many of his former students are now filling professorial chairs, while others are occupying positions of dignity in the administrative services of State and Nation. The successful building up of the department was in no small measure due to his own rare modesty, to the utter absence of any attempt to enhance his own reputation by belittling that of his colleagues, and to his thoroughly scientific spirit of encouraging his subordinates to untrammelled and independent exertion.

Finally we must speak of him as a citizen and a man. He was not one of those who, amid the engrossing cares and exactions of a professional and scholastic career, forget that devotion to science does not excuse one from the equally high obligations of good citizenship. He was always warmly interested in the fight for good government. He thoroughly believed in the practicability of lending a hand to the unfortunate, and was so much attracted by the work of the University Settlement that he lived there at various periods in his career as a resident. He was so completely in sympathy with the principles of the Charity Organization Society that he served for many years as member of its council and acted until the last as the head of one of its district committees, sparing neither time nor effort in his endeavor to make it a success.

Amid all these duties, both in and out of the university, he found leisure for not a little social intercourse. His friends outside the academic sphere were many and warm. What attracted them were the same qualities that won for him so much recognition in college circles. His intellectual honesty, his receptiveness, his unflinching courtesy and kindness, his balance of mind and his rare good judgment all conspired to secure for him an influence which was equalled by but few in the university.

Prof. Mayo-Smith married in June, 1884, Mabel Ford, of Brooklyn, the sister of Paul Leicester Ford and Worthington C. Ford. They had two sons and two daughters. His son Richmond is a captain now in service in France and his daughter Lucie is the wife of Prof. U. B. Phillips, of Michigan University. His brother is Prof. Henry Preserved Smith of Union Theological Seminary.

Prof. Richmond Mayo-Smith was a charter member of the University Club in New York, being one of the first hundred asked to join. He was also a member of the Century Association and of the D. K. E. He was a vestryman of Christ Church and was one of the original members

of both the American Historical Association and the American Economic Association. He died November 11, 1901, stricken down suddenly in the plenitude of his physical and intellectual powers. His career, brilliant though it was, had scarcely more than begun. Those who were privileged to know him intimately are aware of the fact that he had formed important plans for future work and usefulness, and there is no doubt that had he been spared to round out the usual term of life, he would have deserved still better of science and would have shed still more luster on the university to which he was so loyal and whose welfare he had so deeply at heart.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- Methods of investigation of political economy. Science of Economic Discussion. New York, 1886.
- The influence of immigration on the United States of America. Bulletin de l'Institut International de Statistique, Vol. III, 1888. Separately reprinted.
- Emigration and immigration: A study in social science, New York, 1890.
- Science of statistics, Vol. I, Statistics and Sociology, New York, 1895. Vol. II, Statistics and Economics, New York, 1899.
- Die Einwanderung in die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik, Vo. LXXII, 1896.
- Wages, statistics, and the next census. New York, 1896.
- The gold-silver controversy. Essays from the Pol. Sci. Quart., New York, 1896, 141 pp.
- American labor statistics. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 1, 1886, p. 45.
- The National Bureau of Labor and industrial depressions. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 1, 1886, p. 437.
- Control of immigration, I. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 3, 1888, p. 46.
- Control of immigration, II. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 3, 1888, p. 197.
- Control of immigration, III. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 3, 1888, p. 409.
- On census methods. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 5, 1890, p. 259.
- Levasseur's La Population Française. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 8, 1893, p. 124.
- Assimilation of nationalities in the United States. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 9, 1894, p. 426. Part II, p. 649.
- The study of statistics. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 10, 1895, p. 475.
- Free silver and wages. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 11, 1896, p. 464.
- A permanent census bureau. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 11, 1896, p. 589.
- Movements of prices. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 13, 1898, p. 477.
- Price movements and individual welfare. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 15, 1900, p. 14.
- Money and prices. Pol. Sci. Quart., vol. 15, 1900, p. 196.