

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS

By DAVID EUGENE SMITH, President, New York

This Commission was organized at the Rome Congress in 1908. The Central Committee of organization was fortunate in securing for its president a man of highest mathematical ability and one who was interested in all phases of the teaching of the subject,—Professor Felix *Klein* of Göttingen. The vice-president, Sir George *Greenhill* of London, represented mathematics chiefly as applied to physical problems. The secretary, Professor *Fehr* of Geneva, editor of *L'Enseignement Mathématique*, represented the teaching aspect. The committee added to its numbers and secured the cooperation of the national education departments of the various countries represented at the Congress.

During the next four years an intensive study was made of the courses of mathematical instruction in all these countries. By 1912, when the Congress met at Cambridge, about 200 reports had been published,—the first great world survey of any major subject. The importance and influence of this survey can hardly be overestimated. It enabled the leaders in the teaching of the subject to become internationally minded.

The work, however, was not completed, owing to well-known world conditions. In particular, the study of the training of teachers was hardly begun. The Bologna Congress therefore made certain necessary changes in the membership of the Commission and directed that this study be continued by new national committees, the reports to be summarized by Professor Loria of Genova. This has been accomplished as well as world conditions and the universal financial depression have permitted, but is not yet completed.

Two important questions now arise with respect to the future:

- 1) Shall the work of the Commission be continued?
- 2) If so, what shall be its nature?

During my presidency, now definitely coming to a close, I have naturally given much attention to the problem, consulting my colleagues on the various aspects of the matter, and I feel that never before has there been such a need for a searching inquiry into the trend of mathematics in the schools, the colleges, and the universi-