

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

GILBERT MORGAN SMITH (1885 – 1959)

Gilbert Morgan Smith was born in Beloit, Wisconsin on January 6, 1885. After graduating from Beloit College in 1907, he taught science in high school at Stoughton, Wisconsin for a year before beginning Graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin. He interrupted his studies for a year to serve as Instructor in Botany at Pomona College in 1910-11. He obtained his Ph.D. from Wisconsin in 1913 and was married that same year to Helen Pfuderer who shared his career from that time on. He remained in the Botany Department at the University of Wisconsin and moved steadily upward in rank from instructor (1912-17) to assistant professor (1917-19) and associate professor (1919-25). He was invited to Stanford University for the autumn quarter of 1923-24, and in September, 1925 he succeeded Douglas Houghton Campbell as Professor of Botany. He became Emeritus Professor of Biology (Botany) in 1950, but remained active scientifically until he died on July 11, 1959.

G. M. Smith's scholarly output was impressive. Although he was the author of over 40 original contributions, some of which -- like the "Phyto-plankton of the Inland Lakes of Wisconsin"--were lengthy monographs, he was best known for his books, particularly the "Freshwater Algae of the United States," the "Marine Algae of the Monterey Peninsula" and the two volumes of "Cryptogamic Botany." The latter is a scholarly and comprehensive book that is used as a text and reference work for advanced botany courses throughout the English-speaking world.

Dr. Smith's research was accomplished by meticulous organization, efficiency, and self-discipline. After the early days at Wisconsin, his routine followed an invariable pattern. He arrived at his office shortly after eight and wrote or made observations steadily until the middle of the morning when he took a short break (about long enough to smoke a half of a cigarette) during which he stretched his legs or talked with colleagues. He then worked steadily until noon, when he ate lunch with friends at the Union, and returned to work until about 3:30 when he took another break, after which he worked on until about 5:30. On Wednesday afternoons he played golf. When he went home he left his work behind. He never took work home and he never returned to the laboratory in the evening. In the evening, he played bridge, went dancing, entertained friends, and otherwise engaged in an active social life. From eight to five he was a dedicated scientist whose manner was such as to discourage the garrulous; from five to eight he was an excellent bridge player, an accomplished dancer and an interesting conversationalist. His colleagues in biology rarely saw him at play; his social friends had little idea of his prominence as a scientist.

Dr. Smith was a conscientious teacher. He prepared his lectures with the same care used in writing his books, and the same clarity of expression which characterized his writing made him an excellent lecturer. He spoke slowly, but in advanced courses covered a great deal of

material. Although he stuck to business, his lectures were laced with subtle humor. In the laboratory he had little patience with sloppy work, but as the years progressed he became less demanding of his students.

Dr. Smith was accorded many honors. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi. Beloit College recognized his ability relatively early by awarding him an honorary D.Sc. in 1927. Although he was scornful of the biological "politician" his ability and reputation were such that he was elected to office in a number of scientific societies. He served as president of the Botanical Society of America, the American Microscopical Society, the Phycological Society of America, and Section G of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

His friends will remember him for his integrity as a scholar and for his courage in meeting the trials of his final illness.

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