

THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE SOCIETY.

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY AT THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD DECEMBER 28, 1894.

BY DR. EMORY McCLINTOCK.

HAVING been requested by the Council to address the Society on retiring from the presidency, it has appeared to me that I must choose between the discussion of the position and prospects of some branch of mathematics with which I may be familiar and a more general and discursive review of the present position and future prospects of our Society. I have, after some hesitation, chosen the latter subject. It seems desirable, on the whole, that there should be made at this time some permanent record, however slight, of the steps by which so large and flourishing a society has come together, and of the views concerning its present scope and the hopes concerning its future possibilities which are entertained by those who have hitherto been most immediately concerned in the conduct of its affairs.

The New York Mathematical Society, originating in 1888, was at first not much more than a small mathematical club meeting periodically at Columbia College. The first meeting was called by a circular signed by three young men. The number of those who could be expected to attend these meetings was not great, but all who were able and who were sufficiently interested to do so were invited to join the Society. It was fortunate in securing for its first president Professor Van Amringe, distinguished alike by scientific attainments, official eminence, and administrative ability. The professor of astronomy at Columbia was also active in it from the first. The meetings of the young Society were, as I am informed (for at that time I did not reside in New York), attended with more than interest, I might say with zeal. The three who called the Society into being may, without invidiousness, be mentioned as having aided materially in the prosecution of its work. One of these of course need not be named to you. He has served from the beginning as secretary, and again as the leading member of the publication committee. It is no flattery to him to say that the growing energies of the Society must at various stages have become chilled or misdirected, except for his comprehensive intelligence and untiring industry. Another was our former treasurer, now absent from the country. Still another has been elected by you to-day to the office of librarian. The meetings were, as the ordinary meetings still are, held at Columbia College, and at that time the majority of the members of the Society were