

For Dr. Paltsits retirement meant an increase in the incredible busy-ness of his life, the more incredible because years before he had had the warning of a heart attack. It struck again the day after he had written us that he intended to attend the October meeting. His wife, Anne Mueller, died in 1944. They had two children, Victor John and Florence (Mrs. Frederick W. Misch). C. K. S.

ABRAHAM SIMON WOLF ROSENBACH

When the news came that Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach had died on July 1, 1952, it came as a shock to his host of friends and associates, even although he had been hospitalized so many times in the last few years of his life. It seemed impossible that they would no longer have him to turn to for advice and information, to visit and converse with on literature and collecting, to absorb the enthusiasm and inspiration of his broad outlook upon life. Technically a dealer in rare books, he was primarily a bibliophile and a book collector—one of the greatest that the world has ever known. I knew him as a close friend for over forty years and I never went to New York or Philadelphia without visiting with him, often for days at a time. Therefore this cannot be an ordinary obituary sketch—a chronological record of his career and his achievements. In fact, such a summary, even if it covered only the high lights of his life, would require a volume of hundreds of pages. Much of the story is told in the Doctor's numerous contributions to learned periodicals, and especially in his entertaining volumes *Books and Bidders* and *A Book Hunter's Holiday*, and also in the lengthy necrològies which appeared in the newspapers at the time of his death.

For the record, a brief summary of his life follows. He was born in Philadelphia, July 22, 1876, the son of Morris

and Isabella (Pollock) Rosenbach. He entered the University of Pennsylvania where he was graduated in 1898 with the degree of B.S., followed by the degree of Ph.D. in 1901. Planning to be a teacher he was granted a teaching fellowship in English at the University for two years. But his childhood association with his uncle, Moses Pollock, the book-seller, and his urge to collect and own rare books induced him to give up the teaching profession and to go into book-selling. The Doctor joined his brother Philip, who in 1897 had established himself as a book and print dealer at 1320 Walnut Street, and together they formed The Rosenbach Company and 1320 Walnut Street remained its home until its removal to Locust Street in 1943.

After the death of Moses Pollock in August, 1903, the brothers acquired a considerable stock of books, although a part of the Pollock Collection was sold at auction in 1904. Dr. Rosenbach's first catalogue was issued in March 1904, and he was well on his way to a career in the book business. Befriended and supported by two friends, Clarence S. Bement and Joseph M. Fox, both noted collectors of Philadelphia, the Rosenbach brothers were soon in position to purchase libraries of rare books and thus to lay the foundation of the book business which was to become the greatest in the world.

For nearly fifty years he devoted his life to the acquisition of rare books and manuscripts, and to writing on bibliographical and literary subjects. The number of his published contributions was prodigious. The checklist compiled by John Fleming in 1946, including contributions to periodicals and Society publications, shows 92 titles. In all of the editions of *Who's Who*, Dr. Rosenbach described himself as writer and bibliographer. At auctions "Doctor R" was the commanding figure of his time. As soon as he entered the auction room, his competitors realized that

there were few outstanding books which they could obtain, if the Doctor was in a buying mood. In London, where he frequently attended the auctions at Sotheby's, he was known as "The Terror of the Auction Room," and in Paris he was called "Le Napoleon des Livres." In England he bought many entire collections from private owners. The story of his many acquisitions is told in the various books which he published. He once estimated that the sum total of his purchases of books and manuscripts was in excess of seventy-five million dollars.

Whenever he valued a book highly for its rarity or beauty he placed it in his private library, and such books were never offered for sale. I doubt if there were more than half a dozen departures from this rule during his lifetime, and these exceptions were not sales but gifts generously made to friends to complete specialized collections. I know that the Antiquarian Society benefited from this kind of generosity. The private library of the brothers, housed in the family home on Delancey Street, was primarily strong in English literature and in Americana. It presumably was the most valuable private library in the country, and contained many of the greatest show-pieces in the book collecting world. The scope of the collecting was widespread. Perhaps the Doctor's greatest personal hobby was the collecting of children's books. Because of his uncle's inheritance of the stock of the Philadelphia firm of Johnson and Warner, noted publishers of children's books, he early developed a fondness for the subject, and the formation of a collection of early children's literature finally became for him a passion. He gathered the largest and finest privately owned collection in the country, and his printed checklist, entitled *Early American Children's Books*, published in 1933, became the standard authority on the subject. Desiring to keep the collection intact, he presented it to the

Philadelphia Free Library, where it now remains as a memorial to his generosity and his ability as a collector.

Dr. Rosenbach was granted many honors during his life. From the University of Pennsylvania he received the honorary degree of D.A.E. in 1927, in 1945 the degree of D.H.L. from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and in 1947 the degrees of LL.D. from Dropsie College and of L.H.D. from Amherst College. He had been president of the American Jewish Historical Society, American Friends of the Hebrew University, Gratz College, Pennsylvania Library Club, Philobiblon Club, Shakespeare Association of America, corresponding secretary of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, honorary vice-president of the Jewish Publication Society of America, and a trustee or member of many societies and cultural organizations. He was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1928. At the time of his death he was Harbor-master of the Board of Commerce and Navigation of the State of New Jersey.

Elected to the American Antiquarian Society in 1927, he favored the Library many times with gifts of rare books. He read two papers before the Society, "The Libraries of the Presidents of the United States" in 1934, and "The First Theatrical Company in America" in 1938. He was preparing another paper on "Some Discoveries in Early Pennsylvania-German Printing" at the time of his death. Perhaps the recognition that he most highly valued was the volume which thirty of his friends produced in 1946, entitled *To Dr. R.*, printing a series of literary and bibliographical essays written in honor of his seventieth birthday.

Dr. Rosenbach was a life-long friend of organizations which fostered studies in English and American literature and bibliography. His interest culminated in 1930 when he established the A. S. W. Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography. By the terms of this Fellowship, with its endowment

to provide suitable honorariums, scholars were invited to deliver lectures at the University of Pennsylvania, these lectures to be expanded into book form for publication. To 1952 fourteen volumes have been published, all by scholars in their chosen fields.

In April, 1950, Philip established The Philip H. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation to foster and encourage interest in books, manuscripts, paintings, drawings, prints, furniture, silverware and other objects of art. Almost simultaneously with the creation of the Foundation important gifts were made to it, including the Doctor's collection of Americana and Philip's collection of English books, in expectation of making their home on Delancey Street a museum. Doctor Rosenbach bequeathed his entire residuary estate to the Foundation.

The encouragement of the brothers Rosenbach to literary undertakings will always remain as a monument to their interest in cultural American life.

Personally the passing of the Doctor means much to me, after a close friendship of forty years. It must mean much to others, for he had the capacity of making friends and keeping them. His nature was attractive and companionable. For a man of his achievements he was modest and self-depreciating, even although he was always willing to narrate the story of some marvellous acquisition. I know that he was often shy and sensitive. But I can think of no better host or friend.

C. S. B.

GEORGE PARKER WINSHIP

George Winship was born at Bridgewater, Massachusetts, on July 29, 1871, a son of Albert Edward and Ella R. (Parker) Winship. From Somerville High School he went

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