

American art. A year after his election Kimball presented a paper before the society on the Bradford, Vermont, globe maker, James Wilson. Later, he attended a number of annual meetings and was a frequent contributor to our book funds.

Mr. Kimball is survived by his widow, Gipsy Robinson Kimball, and a brother.
M. A. Mc.

FREDERIC GERSHOM MELCHER

Fred Melcher was one of the truly great and influential figures in the American book trade, but to us in these parts he was rather the last link with the Boston book business of the carriage-trade days, with the authors, dealers, sellers, and buyers who are only famous names to our generation. He was born in Malden on April 12, 1879, a son of Edwin Forrest and Alice Jane (Bartlett) Melcher, and was brought up in Newton Center, then a country village. He was educated in the Newton public schools with M.I.T. in mind, but because of "hard times" went instead to work for Lauriat in 1895. That chapter of his life is delightfully narrated in his article, "A Boston Bookstore at the Turn of the Century" in our *Proceedings* for April, 1956. Nothing better illustrates his genius than his recognition of the quality of Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives Tale*, and his order for five hundred copies which was the match which touched off that author's career.

From Boston, Mr. Melcher went to Indianapolis in 1913 to be manager of the W. K. Stewart bookstore. There he began his activity in library circles, and there his sweet and gentle charm, so unlike the aggressiveness of some other men of business, made him welcome in the less competitive circles of the book world. The fact that Mrs. Melcher, the former Margaret Fellows, was an author of distinction helped to bridge the gap.

In 1918 the Melchers moved to New York where Fred became co-editor of *Publishers Weekly* and secretary of the American Booksellers' Association. Quickly he became a major figure in the book world, president of the American Institute of Graphic Arts in 1927, of the New York Library Association in 1935, and of the Bowker Company in 1934, to name but a few. His influence can be measured by his establishment of Children's Book Week in 1919, the John Newbery Medal in 1921, the Caldecott Medal in 1937, and the Carey-Thomas Award in 1943. Rutgers recognized his contribution by awarding him a Litt.D. in 1958, and Syracuse duplicated it the following year.

Fred Melcher was always greatly interested in the history of printing and the book trade, and in Isaiah Thomas in particular. In 1934 he began a voluminous correspondence with Clarence Brigham on these subjects, and in April, 1935, he was elected to membership. The pressure of business kept him from attending many meetings, but he did speak on "The Bookstore in the 1850's" at that of October, 1937. He comprehended and approved of the policies of the American Antiquarian Society, which he described as "a rightly developed and unique library," and he unsuccessfully urged a strong program to obtain a sufficient endowment to permit it to function efficiently. Clarence Brigham used to argue that we should never buy a new book (at which we would presumably have another shot) so long as there were available on the market old books which we ought to have. For many years Fred made this policy work by sending us each six months the accumulation of review copies in American history and biography which had come into the Bowker Company. He contributed financially as well, and corresponded with us at great length on matters of history and publishing. He went regularly from his home in Montclair to his office in New York until last October,

when an accident limited his activity. Although this reduced the circle of his movements, he remained keenly interested in his different projects until his death on March 9, 1963, of a cerebral hemorrhage. He is survived by his wife, three children, and several grandchildren. C. K. S.

IRVING SANDS OLDS

Irving S. Olds of New York City was elected a member of the Society in April, 1953, after several years of lively correspondence and friendship with Clarence Brigham. Although he never attended a meeting, he was a frequent contributor to our book funds.

Mr. Olds' interest in naval prints, which sparked his original contact with us, resulted in the publication of *American Naval and Other Historical Prints, Bits and Pieces of American History* and *The United States Navy, 1776-1815*.

Olds was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, on January 22, 1887, the son of Clark and Livia Elizabeth (Keator) Olds. He was a graduate of Yale, class of 1907, and received many honorary degrees as his abilities in business, government, and cultural affairs became manifest.

He was a partner in the legal firm of White & Case; chairman of the board of the United States Steel Company; served the government in many ways, especially during World Wars I and II. At Yale he was president of the Yale University Council and earlier had served as a fellow of the Yale Corporation.

Among the many organizations to which he belonged, he was president of the New-York Historical Society, succeeding our late member LeRoy E. Kimball in late 1962. Olds was a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and the Metropolitan Opera Association.

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