HERBERT ELLSWORTH SLAUGHT—IN MEMORIAM

Among the members of our mathematical community in America one of the men most widely known by teachers and students of mathematics was Herbert Ellsworth Slaught. His lifelong devotion to his University and to the promotion of the study of mathematics, his skill as a teacher, his effective leadership in the mathematical organizations which he sponsored, and his influence with teachers of mathematics the country over, were remarkable. He was born July 21, 1861 and died on May 21, 1937 after a life of unusual success in the sequence of important undertakings to which he gave his enthusiastic support.

During his high school and college years Slaught's life was a difficult one. When he was thirteen years old his family lost the farm on Seneca Lake near Watkins, New York, which up to that time had been their home. It seemed a catastrophe, but Slaught himself has said that he would probably have spent his life working on the farm if it had not happened, and the farm apparently was not a very good one. At any rate in 1875 he and two older brothers of approximately college age found themselves in Hamilton, New York, with an older sister and an invalid mother to support, and with educations needing completion. The story of their success and of the cheerful cooperation of their family group would give encouragement to every young man who finds himself in similar circumstances. The two older boys became successful physicians, and Herbert graduated from Colgate Academy in 1879 and from Colgate University in 1883, each time as valedictorian of his class. He received his A.M. in 1886, and was honored with an Sc.D. in 1911, both from Colgate.

Soon after receiving his bachelor's degree Slaught was recommended by one of his professors for an instructorship in mathematics at Peddie Institute in Hightstown, New Jersey. As an instructor he was unusually successful from the start, and his administrative ability was soon recognized by his appointment to be assistant principal in 1886 and principal in 1889. But his real interest was in his mathematics and his teaching. He had married Miss Mary L. Davis, the instructor in music at Peddie, in 1885, and she sympathized with and encouraged his desire to enter the field of university mathematical work, even though such a course meant a serious sacrifice for them for some time to come. So in 1892 Slaught accepted a two-year appointment to one of the first three fellowships awarded by the Department of Mathematics at the University of Chicago, which was just then opening its doors. It was important both for the Department and for him that he had also a promise of summer quarter teaching to help out with his finances, since his performance in this teaching work early assured the Department of his skill as an instructor.

Thus began Slaught's long career at our University. He was relatively unprepared for graduate work in mathematics, but with his usual thoroughness he supplemented his college training intensively during the summer of 1892, and in the autumn was ready to carry on as a graduate student with success. In 1894, after the expiration of his term as a fellow, the fine quality of his teaching was evident and he was successively appointed reader, associate, assistant, and instructor, during the years 1894–97. In the winter quarter of 1898 he re-