

OSKAR BOLZA—IN MEMORIAM

Oskar Bolza came to the United States from Germany in 1888, and returned in 1910 to make his home in Freiburg im Baden during the later years of his life. He was an influential member of our American mathematical community for twenty-two years, including those significant ones during which the American Mathematical Society was founded and had its early growth. He was one of the founders of the Chicago Section of the Society, was a member of the Council of the Society in 1900–1902 and vice president in 1904. He was beloved by his students and associates. He was born on May 12, 1857 in Bergzabern, Germany, and word reached this country in the autumn of 1942 through the American Red Cross that he died peacefully on July 5, 1942, presumably in Freiburg. The following pages are devoted to a sketch of his life and scientific activities. They have unusual significance for our American mathematical community.

Bolza's father was in the judicial service in Germany and the family dwelt in various places in southern Germany during Bolza's childhood years. In 1873 they made Freiburg their permanent home, and the ties which bound Bolza to that city were thereafter always very strong. His mother was a daughter of Friedrich Koenig, the inventor of a rapid printing press in the early part of the nineteenth century. The manufacture of printing presses proved to be profitable through the years, and so far as is known Bolza's life was free from financial worries.

Even in his early years Bolza was an industrious and independent student. His first strong interests seemed to be the beginning of a career in languages and comparative philology. But in 1873 he attended an academy in Neuchatel and later the Gymnasium in Freiburg, in both of which he had excellent instructors in mathematics. There for the first time he became enamoured of the subject, and mathematics remained his principal interest during all but a few years of the rest of his life.

In the autumn of 1875 Bolza went to Berlin to begin his university student career. At that time it was expected that he would ultimately succeed to a share in the management of the family printing press factory. But his father wanted him to have a liberal as well as a technical education, and for that reason he first attended both the University and the Gewerbeakademie in Berlin. It soon became clear that this double program was impractical, and that Bolza's interests were likely to lie much more in pure science than in business. He at first