MEMORIAL OF GEORGE FREDERICK KUNZ

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George Frederick Kunz, known and respected in mineralogical circles for almost sixty years, noted for his wide and extended knowledge of precious stones from all parts of the world, prominent in the affairs of his city, broadly acquainted and versed in the field of general science, unselfish in his service to his fellow men, passed away in New York City, June 29, 1932.

GEORGE FREDERICK KUNZ
1856–1932

Dr. Kunz was born in New York on September 29, 1856, the son of J. G. and Marie Ida Widmar Kunz. At the time of his death he was seventy-six years of age.

The early boyhood of Dr. Kunz was spent in Hoboken where he became interested in collecting minerals from the trap rock ridges of the Palisades and the Watchung Mountains. It is reported that he started exchanging mineral specimens with collectors abroad at the age of fourteen. While still a boy he completed a collection

of 4,000 specimens, weighing two tons, which was sold to the University of Minnesota for $400. This was the forerunner of several important collections largely assembled through his efforts, the most outstanding being the famous Morgan-Tiffany collection of gems in the American Museum of Natural History. He was also instrumental in interesting the elder Mr. Morgan in the purchase of the Bement Collection for the Museum, and arranged the collection of elements for Morgan Hall.

At the early age of twenty-three Dr. Kunz was made vice-president of Tiffany and Company. His rapid rise in the field of applied mineralogy was accomplished through continuous and devoted effort. He was educated in the public schools and received his more advanced training at Cooper Union. He was a wide and varied reader, however, and much of his practical education was acquired through his own efforts. As evidence of the success of his efforts, his scholarly achievements were recognized by honorary degrees from several institutions including Columbia University (A.M., 1898), University of Marburg (Ph.D., 1903), and Knox University (Sc.D., 1907).

He traveled extensively in his early years, and much of his knowledge was gained through first-hand contact with the leading mineral localities of the United States and Europe. Interest in minerals and gems was continued up to the very end, and many are the friends of the mineralogical clan who have had the pleasure, through his kindness, of holding the Tiffany diamond while visiting the famous store.

Few men have had as wide an acquaintance with precious stones, and particularly their occurrence and distribution, as Dr. Kunz. In addition to his store of knowledge, he assembled one of the best libraries on precious stones in existence. Along Maiden Lane and Fifth Avenue there were few tradesmen who did not have the utmost respect for his judgment concerning the merits of cut stones, particularly of the rarer types.

The varied interests of Dr. Kunz kept him involved in a wide field of activities. He took an active part in the entertainment of distinguished visitors to New York City, particularly scientists. Organizations claiming the honor of his membership included the Mineralogical Society of America, the Geological Society of America, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, New York Academy of Sciences, New York Mineralogical

Club, the New York Bird and Tree Club, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, Société de Chimie Industrielle de France (American section), Century Association, City History Club, and Pilgrims of the United States. In spite of membership in numerous organizations, he was particularly interested in the New York Mineralogical Club. Together with a small group of mineral collectors he organized the club in 1886 and served for many years as its president.

Dr. Kunz was in charge of the department of mines at the Paris Exposition in 1889, the Kimberley (South Africa) exposition in 1892, and the Chicago exposition of 1893. He was honorary special agent of the department of mines at the Atlanta exposition of 1895 and the Omaha exposition of 1898. As a special investigator he served with the U. S. Fish Commission in its investigation of American pearls between 1892 and 1893.

In 1900 he was sent to the Paris Exposition as an honorary special agent to the U. S. Commission General, and served also in that year as United States delegate to the Paris International Congress. He was radium commissioner to the St. Louis exposition of 1904, and had charge of precious stones for the twelfth census.

Foreign honors bestowed upon Dr. Kunz included being elected an officer of the Legion of Honor of France, Knight of the Order of St. Olaf of Norway, and an officer of the Rising Sun of Japan. He was an honorary member of the Chambre Syndicale Pierres Precieuses of Paris.

Dr. Kunz was one of the founders and president of the Museum of Peaceful Arts, former vice-president of the New York Academy of Sciences and the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers. He was a member of the North American Indian Memorial Commission. He served as special agent for the U. S. Geological Survey from 1883 to 1909, and continued to write annual reports on precious stones until the time of his death. From 1904 to 1918 he served as research curator of gems and precious stones for the Museum of Natural History, and later was made research associate of gems.

Dr. Kunz was president of the association to introduce the metric system into the United States, and all jewelers owe him a debt of gratitude for his efforts in aiding the establishment of the international carat.

The gem kunzite found at Pala, San Diego County, California, and described by Professor Charles Baskerville in 1903 was named in his honor. He was instrumental in the naming of tiffanyite, moissanite, and morganite.

Dr. Kunz was a prolific writer. His contributions include a list of over three hundred articles on gems and minerals, aside from several well known books. Outstanding publications include "Gems and Precious Stones of North America," "The Book of the Pearl," "The Curious Lore of Precious Stones," "E. Roty and His Work," "Magic of Jewels," "Ivory and the Elephant," "Shakespeare and Precious Stones," and "The Ring."

Dr. Kunz married Miss Sophia Hanforth in 1879; she passed away in January 1912. He was married to Miss Opal Logan Giberson in May 1923. The marriage was later annulled, although Miss Giberson assisted in maintaining his household and helped in entertaining up to the time of his death.

Dr. Kunz entered the hospital for medical examination early in June when his health began to fail. He maintained close contact with business interests until June 28. He was stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage, and passed away on the morning of the 29th.

He is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Hans Zinsser, and by two sisters, Mrs. Millie Kunz Guttin and Mrs. Ida Kunz Taggart.

Among benefactions mentioned in the will of Dr. Kunz were gifts to the Mineralogical Society of America, the Mineralogical Collections of Columbia University, the New York Mineralogical Club, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, the New York Academy of Sciences, and the United States Geological Survey. The gifts were directed essentially toward the collection and dissemination of scientific information.

In concluding, it seems fitting to offer the final paragraph of an editorial printed July 2nd in the New York Times in tribute to Dr. Kunz.

> It cannot be irreverent to suggest that no one of all men of our day could be more interested in seeing the celestial city whose light is "like unto a very precious stone," or in inspecting the foundations of the wall of jasper adorned with all manner of precious stones: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius. chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst.