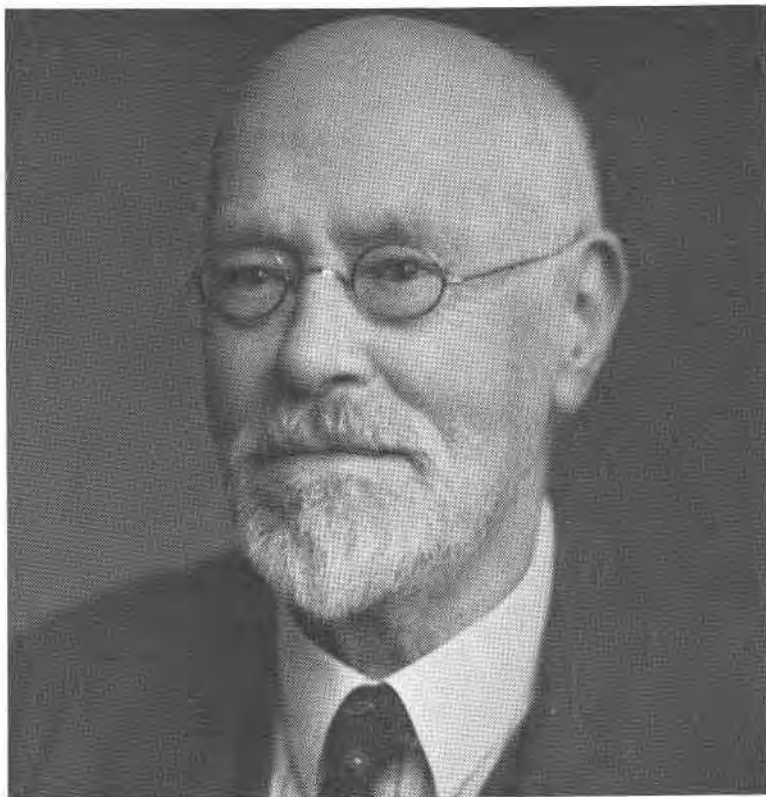


MEMORIAL OF LEONARD JAMES SPENCER

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Leonard James Spencer, Honorary Fellow of the Society and Roebling Medallist, died in London on April 14, 1959 at the advanced age of 88. He was fourth in a line of distinguished Keepers of Minerals in the British Museum, his predecessors being Story-Maskelyne appointed first Keeper in 1857, Sir Lazarus Fletcher and G. T. Prior. All three were



LEONARD JAMES SPENCER
1870-1959

Fellows of the Royal Society to which Spencer also was elected in 1925. He was born at Worcester on July 7, 1870, the eldest son of James Spencer, schoolmaster, and Elizabeth Bonser, and was educated at Bradford Technical College (1883-1886) where his father was for many years headmaster of the day school department. With a Royal Exhibition Spencer proceeded to the Royal College of Science for Ireland in Dublin (1886-

1889) and later entered Cambridge University as a scholar of Sidney Sussex College. Here he studied geology, mineralogy and chemistry gaining a first class in both parts of the Natural Sciences Tripos and was awarded the Harkness scholarship for Geology (1893). It was fortunate for mineralogy that just at the end of his Cambridge course there happened to be one of the infrequent vacancies in the scientific staff of the Mineral Department of the British Museum, and for this post Spencer was the successful candidate. The latter part of the year 1893 he spent at Munich studying under Groth, Weinschenk, and Muthmann. His appointment at the Museum dated from January 1, 1894. Through more than forty years Spencer held office in the Mineral Department, succeeding to the Keepership on the retirement of Prior, but intimate connection with the department lasted for another twenty-four years to the time of his death. He married in 1899 Edith Mary Close (died 1954) and leaves one son and two daughters.

Spencer's achievements fall into three main fields, his work as curator, as an original investigator, and as editor and bibliographer. He was a born collector and an indefatigable and incessant worker and as curator of the natural collections in his department his labors were remarkable for their thoroughness and accuracy. He established in the Mineral Department the system of registration, labelling and cataloguing and it is mainly through his efforts that this collection is now probably the best documented and indexed in the world. His output of original research was considerable and his publications, more than 150 in all, range over a wide field of descriptive mineralogy. Many of his early papers stemmed from the curatorial work he did on the crystallographic catalogue. He described as new the minerals miersite, tarbuttite, parahopeite, chloroxiphite, diaboelite, schultenite, aramayoite and bismutotantalite, besides supplying much new data on incompletely described species. In later years his early interest in meteorites was renewed and greatly stimulated by his visit to South-West-Africa in 1929 where he studied the meteorites of Gibeon and Hoba.

The discovery of silica-glass fragments at meteorite craters (Henbury and Wabar) led him eventually to take up the problem of tektites and their origin. These he believed were the products of the impact of large meteorites on the Earth. It was about this time (1934) on the eve of his retirement that his enthusiasm led him to accept an invitation to join an expedition to the Libyan desert to study the remarkable masses of silica-glass found by P. A. Clayton in 1932. He failed however to find the hoped-for evidence of meteorite craters and returned with the problem of the origin of the glass still unsolved. Spencer's lively interest in meteo-

rites endured to the end, his last publication being a communication on the subject in *Nature* of March 1958.

The third field of Spencer's activity was as editor, bibliographer and abstractor, and in this domain he gave immense service to his science. His work as abstractor began soon after his appointment to the British Museum. From the first he contributed abstracts to the *Mineralogical Magazine* and as early as 1895 he was preparing abstracts in the field of mineral chemistry for the *Journal of the Chemical Society*; later he contributed to the Annual Reports of the same Society. He took over the editorship of the *Mineralogical Magazine* from Miers at the close of 1900 and continued to edit it until the end of 1955. He prepared the indexes of the Magazine covering in all twenty volumes and these appeared in two issues (1895, 1926). He supplied triennially lists of new mineral names (21 lists in all), and obituary notices of mineralogists (eight series) and three supplementary lists of British minerals. In 1920 the Mineralogical Society commenced publication of *Mineralogical Abstracts* with Spencer as editor. These appeared as a sequel to the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature which terminated in 1914. During this period as editor (1920–1955) twelve volumes were issued and he lived to see *Mineralogical Abstracts* appear in a new format as a joint publication of the British and American Mineralogical Societies aiming at a still wider international coverage of mineralogy. The Mineralogical Society celebrated Spencer's fifty years as editor of the Magazine by the issue of a Jubilee number in 1950 to which colleagues at home and abroad contributed papers and on the occasion of the anniversary meeting in November 1950, a dinner was given in his honor.

The last decade of Spencer's service at the British Museum brought him honors and promotion richly deserved. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (1925) and correspondent of the Mineralogical Society of America (1926) and he succeeded to the Keepership of the Mineral Department in 1927. The Roebling Medal was awarded to him in 1940. He served as President of the Mineralogical Society (1936–1939) and became its Foreign Secretary in 1949. Spencer continued an active member of the Society to the end attending regularly meetings of the Council and of the Society itself. He continued also to serve as a member of his successor's team of abstractors for *Mineralogical Abstracts*. He had been a member of the Society for 65 years and for long an honored and familiar figure on the front bench at its meetings. As we look back on his achievements, the unique service he gave to mineralogy, we realize the magnitude of the loss we have sustained. In the annals of the Society he served so well, his passing marks indeed the end of an epoch.

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