GEORGE FREDERICK KUNZ
(1856-1932)

When George Frederick Kunz died, he remained one of the "giants" in the field of mineralogy, gemology and collecting. Born a New Yorker in 1856, he was educated in the public schools of New York and New Jersey. In 1856 the family of Dr. Kunz moved to Hoboken where at an early age the young Mr. Kunz was collecting and selling mineral specimens discovered near his family's home in an excavation at Bergen Hill. Intelligent and ambitious at age 14, Kunz began sending specimens of minerals abroad for exchange. It was without doubt this interest in mineral collecting which shaped the career of this remarkable man. Largely self-taught, his knowledge of mineralogy was remarkable.

In 1879, he joined the firm of Tiffany and Company as a gem expert, this being in all probability, the first instance of employment of a mineralogist in this capacity in the jewelry industry. While with Tiffany, he travelled widely in North America investigating sources of supply of gem minerals in the rough, and gathering the information which he published in 1890 in the *Gemstones of North America*. It was also during the eight years from 1881 to 1889 that he gathered together the wonderful collection, representing the American gems in all their phases, that brought American Gems into prominence at the Paris Exposition of 1889. This collection was bought by J. Pierpont Morgan and presented to the American Museum of Natural History. A beautiful lilac colored transparent gem spodumene was discovered in Southern California in 1902 and was named Kunzite in honor of Mr. Kunz. The American Museum in 1904, recognizing his abilities as a specialist, appointed him honorary Curator of Gems. He held this post for 14 years. Like Tavernier, Dr. Kunz returned from his travellings in many lands with a wealth of anecdotes and incidents which highlight his works. In 1883 he began to contribute to the "Mineral Resources of the United States" and to write for the Government report until 1906 when he began writing the yearly chapters on precious stones for the mineral industry. Dr. Kunz became a fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences in 1914 and was elected president of this body. In 1886 he founded the New York Mineralogical Club and was its first secretary (at this time the club had no president.) He was always active in the affairs of the organization acting as its president from 1914 to 1926.

From 1892 to 1899, Dr. Kunz served as special commissioner on American pearls for the United States Fish Commissioner, and in 1904 he produced with Charles H. Stevenson, "The Book of the Pearl," a monumental work on this subject. Always a man of unsurpassing energy, this voluminous writer displayed a lively interest in gem lore and magic and described the falls of meteorites.

Prominent in the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, Kunz served as Vice-President from 1899 to 1901. Dr. Kunz was keenly interested in introducing the metric system into the United States, and was President of the American Metric Association. Among his other interests were the development of the uses of radium, on behalf of which he served as commissioner to the St. Louis Exposition in 1904.

He served as President of the American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society and was a research associate on gems on the staff of the American Museum of Natural History. Dr. Kunz also was a

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founder and past president of the Museum of Science and Industry. He received the honorary degree of master of Arts (Columbia University, 1898) Doctor of Philosophy (University of Marburg, 1906) and Doctor of Science (Knox University, 1907). He was also decorated as an Officer of the Legion of Honor (France), Knight of the Order of St. Olaf (Norway), and Officer of the Rising Sun (Japan). This great wealth of knowledge and experience is preserved by the legacy of his writings. Dr. Kunz is the father of modern *gemology*. Coincidentally the sale of these writings fall on the 150th Anniversary of Tiffany and Company.