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Leonard James Spencer, Editor 1900-55 :

An appreciation.

By A PAST PRESIDENT

DR. SPENCER was appointed Editor of the 'Mineralogical Magazine' in late 1900 and retired from the office in December 1955.

It is my privilege now to thank Dr. Spencer on behalf of the Mineralogical Society for his superlative performance of duties willingly and joyfully borne throughout these fifty-five years.

Mr. Spencer was elected to the Society on 6th February, 1894. His impact on the Journal was immediate: the number (48) issued in September of that year contained 10½ pages of abstracts by L. J. S., occupying fully one-eighth of the publication. This number was the final one to complete Volume X: what a golden opportunity for young Spencer: he seized it with both hands and presented to the Editor an 'Index of Authors and Subjects, Volumes I-X' with, for good measure, a 'Supplementary List of Errata, vols. I-X' running to five pages of print! 'The preparation of the Index, which extends to 88 pages of closely printed matter', says the Report of Council for Session 1895-6, 'was undertaken as a labour of love by Mr. L. J. Spencer to whom the hearty thanks of the Society are due.'

Thereafter research papers and abstracts came from his pen in a steady stream. In 1897 he contributed his first 'List of new mineral names' supplementary to which a list was destined to appear triennially as the final paper of each volume. At the Annual Meeting on 14th November 1899 Spencer was elected to the Council, which since then has never been without his counsel and services, for, on the retirement of H. A. Miers from the Editorship on the completion of Volume XII by Number 58, November 1900, the Council was 'glad to report that Mr. Spencer is

willing to undertake the duties and has been appointed Editor'. Editor he has remained to see the completion of Volume XXX by Number 231 issued in December 1955.

In the course of his long term of duty Spencer has edited 901 original papers, of which he himself has provided 49 and contributed to five others in addition to his Lists of new mineral names, for publication in the Magazine. Responsibly, and joyously one imagines, as he set about his duties in 1901 when the number printed that year totalled 114 pages, he could not have foreseen that the annual printing would rise to over 500 pages. But so intense was, and remains, his interest in the science and its advancement and so deep his love for the Magazine that a foresight of the future could have brought naught but happy incentive. Wide-ranging knowledge of his science and pride in the prestige of his Journal were the foundations of the excellence of his Editorship. Tirelessly and relentlessly in the interests of the Society and the Journal he has disciplined authors, publishers, and himself. Though, with Pope, he might have said

. . . I read
 With honest anguish, and an aching head;
 And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,
 This saving counsel, 'Keep your piece nine years',

his own words¹ are these: 'I have had no hesitation in inviting [his word] authors to reconsider their papers and if necessary to rewrite and curtail them.' He continues: 'I have with very few exceptions found authors most reasonable and grateful for assistance.' Small wonder he found them so for his knowledge was profound and his purpose selfless! Retaining proofs for a minimum of time and tolerating no tardiness by the authors, he has harried the publishers as well so that each number should appear duly on the day appointed. In the difficult times after 1945 of paper and labour shortages and of confused transition to peacetime activities his anxieties and labours in achieving prompt publication of each number were prodigious. Furious as delays of a week to a fortnight made him, he fortunately rarely had to endure the pain and self-condemnation which the non-appearance of a number within the month for which he had press-marked it would assuredly have caused.

Among his anxieties as Editor Spencer has always had that of costs. Thanks to his meticulous editing additional costs arising from corrections to proofs have always been extremely low. Constantly rising

¹ Amer. Min., 1941, vol. 26, p. 165.

prices have harassed him, especially in recent years: but this problem is an old one. His solution in 1920 illustrates both his financial acumen and his willingness to undertake still more work for the benefit of the Society and its Journal: 'The Editor reported that owing to the increased cost of printing he was issuing smaller numbers of the Journal at more frequent intervals, the price for each number remaining as before. . . .' (Proc. Min. Soc., vol. 19, 1921, p. xxiv). This solution introduced the quarterly issue of Magazine and Abstracts which now rules.

In the early numbers of the 'Mineralogical Magazine' reviews of books and abstracts of important papers that had appeared in other journals were a constant feature. From his first year as a member of the Society Spencer was, as we have seen, an enthusiastic contributor of abstracts. As work in mineralogical and in other branches of science increased in volume and appeared in new journals and more various languages, abstracts grew ever more essential to research. The 'International Catalogue of Scientific Literature' having been instituted to meet this need, the publication of mineralogical abstracts in the Magazine was suspended, and from 1900 to 1914 Spencer contributed his abstracts on mineralogy to the 'Catalogue'. This period came to an end in 1914. The question of resuming publication of abstracts in the Magazine was considered by the Council in 1917, but not until 1920 was the decision taken to publish abstracts once more. How eagerly and impatiently must the Editor have awaited the authority to go ahead! With the first number of the Magazine issued after this decision, vol. 19, no. 88, 1920, there appeared vol. 1, no. 1 of 'Mineralogical Abstracts' comprising 37 items on 16 pages, all by L. J. S. It was bound in with the Magazine, as now, as a separately paged appendix, but could be bought separately. When the first volume was completed in 1922 its abstracts totalled 424 pages of which Spencer had contributed 262, and it included the first of those remarkable indexes, arranged by topography and by subject, which have proved a boon to workers in mineralogical and kindred sciences. In the thirty-six years covered by the twelve volumes of 'Mineralogical Abstracts' which have now been published, Spencer's own contribution of text is of the order of 5000 pages. As Editor he has checked all references, in a multiplicity of languages and scripts, contained in the 7322 pages. Examination of the 'lists of errata', which with a driving passion for accuracy he has included with each subsequent index number, provides one measure of his editorial efficiency; errors of reference are no more than 0.002%: no doubt he would say that the figure is still higher than it ought to be.

The time that Spencer has saved and the help that he has given crystallographers, mineralogists, and petrologists by his abstracts and by the rich, systematic, and accurate indexes which close each volume are incalculable. 'It is a mere statement of fact', said Professor A. N. Winchell in presenting to Dr. Spencer in 1940 the Roebling Gold Medal of the Mineralogical Society of America, 'to say that Mineralogical Abstracts has come to be recognised very generally as the best publication of its kind. It is now the chief source of prompt information regarding all publications in the field of mineralogy, and, as such, it is of fundamental importance in all research work in our science.' In his reply Spencer said 'the indexing has been taken seriously'.

It must suffice only to mention his twenty 'Lists of new mineral names' and 'Biographical notices of mineralogists recently deceased'. 'Lists' for Spencer is a wide term: his lists include full reference to the original paper, etymology of the name, concise chemical and crystallographic information on the mineral, reference to comparable species or variety, and finally a page and volume reference to the Abstracts. Occasionally he relieves his labour with a 'crack': 'Poly-, prefix in some 30 mineral names. . . . It has now been extended with other significations, giving rise to polyonymous complexities.'¹ In the series of Biographical notices begun in 1921 he has paid homage to 375 workers in his science, and has periodically indicated to surviving colleagues their prospects of mortality.

Not quite so spry physically as he used to be, Spencer continues alert and blithe in spirit. 'I have had a good innings with the *Min. Mag.*', he writes in a letter of 5th December of this year, 'for which I started writing abstracts and notes in 1894. I am glad to be now free to get on with my own work. I have ideas for several books. . . .' May he have many happy years developing and setting forth these ideas, and editing and indexing their printed formulation to the further benefit of mineralogical science and, above all, to his own satisfaction.

J. P.

14th December, 1955.

¹ *Min. Mag.*, 1955, vol. 30, p. 743.