

## MEMORIAL OF FRIEDRICH J. K. BECKE\*

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On June 18, 1931, mineralogy lost another of its stalwart leaders when Professor Friedrich Becke died in Vienna, Austria, after a long illness. Although few American mineralogists had the privilege of knowing Professor Becke personally, all are familiar with his outstanding contributions to the science. These were so signal that many honors were bestowed upon him, among which was his election as honorary life fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America in 1928.



FRIEDRICH J. K. BECKE  
1855-1931

Friedrich Johann Karl Becke was born at Prague, on December 31, 1855. His father was a book dealer, but later in life became a railroad official. In preparation for admission to the university Professor Becke studied at the gymnasiums in Prague, Budweis, and Vienna. In 1874 he entered the University of Vienna where he spent six years studying mineralogy and petrography under the guidance of the eminent Gustav Tschermak, and in 1880 the doctorate was conferred upon him. In 1881 he qualified for a university position in petrography at Vienna, and the following year was appointed assistant professor of mineralogy at the University of Czernowitz. He held this position for four years when he was advanced to a full professorship. From 1890 to 1898 he was professor

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of mineralogy at the German University at Prague. He then returned to his alma mater, the University of Vienna, where he continued in active service until his retirement in 1927.

In this brief memorial it is not possible to refer at length to his many and varied achievements, for throughout his academic life he was an exceedingly active and brilliant investigator. Upon the occasion of his seventieth birthday, in 1925, a memorial volume was published in his honor by his colleagues, friends, and former students, which contains a record of his scientific publications numbering over 250 titles. Professor Becke did not confine his efforts to any one field but contributed to the advancement of several phases of the science, that is, to the development of descriptive mineralogy, geometrical and chemical crystallography, petrography, and crystal optics. His contributions to our knowledge of etch figures are also well known.

Eminent as Professor Becke was as a teacher and investigator, he was equally distinguished as an editor, for *Tschermak's Mineralogische und Petrographische Mitteilungen* was published for many years under his immediate direction. He also revised *Tschermak's* well known textbook on mineralogy several times. Furthermore, for a considerable period he served as the general secretary of the Royal Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna.

Many high honors came to Professor Becke in his native country and from abroad, among which were the awards of the Eduard Suess medal of the Geological Society of Vienna and of the Wollaston medal of the Geological Society of London. At the time he retired from active service in 1927, he received the medal for distinguished service to the Austrian Republic. Moreover, he was frequently honored by election to membership in learned and scientific societies, of which those of Göttingen, Berlin, Munich, Oslo, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg (Leningrad), and Prague may be mentioned. That he was an honorary life fellow of our society has already been referred to.

It may well be said that Professor Becke was one of mineralogy's intellectual giants. His death adds another name to the list of illustrious teachers and investigators in Europe who worked so heroically to place mineralogy in its present advanced position, and who have died in recent years: Lewis (1926), Baumhauer (1926), *Tschermak* (1927), Groth (1927), Doelter (1930), Wülfing (1930), Beckenkamp (1931), and Becke (1931).