

a bad position worse, while to drift on as we are doing is itself a confession of surrender, and can but lead to the eventual victory of the other side. It may be argued that my proposal does in fact give statutory recognition. That the future will decide. In the meantime the course I suggest does neutralize the worst consequences of official recognition in that the optician works, not independently, but under the supervision of an ophthalmic surgeon; it does meet an urgent war need; and it may create later an entirely new situation in terms of which the lines of future policy may more clearly be discerned. I realise that there are difficulties, which I do not propose to discuss at this stage, but I feel also that, as a war-time experiment on an adequate scale, such a proceeding is clearly justifiable.

Yours very truly,

A. RUGG-GUNN.

18, HARLEY STREET, W.1

*November 13, 1941.*

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## OBITUARY

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### DR. JAMES KERR

DR. JAMES KERR, whose recent departure from this life of ours is recorded on October 5, was not an ophthalmic surgeon. But there has been no member of our profession in the past fifty years who did more for the preservation and assistance of the eyesight of our fellow countrymen than did Dr. James Kerr.

His record is brilliant indeed. He was born in Glasgow. From there he went to Manchester Grammar School. Thence he went to St. John's College, Cambridge, with a science scholarship. He justified that scholarship, for he got first class honours in the Natural Science Tripos. Then he went to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London as a senior science scholar. He gained all his degrees, and the D.P.H. at Cambridge.

He started practice in Bradford, and soon got on the staff of some of the hospitals there. One of these was the Bradford Eye and Ear Hospital. In that city he became linked with school work, and was made medical superintendent of the Bradford School Board. He did a fine piece of work in organising a school medical service. That brought him to London, where he was the first medical officer of the old time London School Board; which ultimately was absorbed into the London County Council. In that

office he started the greatest school medical service that has ever been known.

It was in that London school work of his that I first came into contact with him. He called a number of us young eye men who were working as clinical assistants at Moorfields and other hospitals, to help him in an investigation of the vision of the London school children. Each of us was allotted an area of schools. We were to give three half-days a week to the work. I remember well his instructions. Go to your schools, he said, examine the children's eyes for surface diseases. Test their visual acuity with a test card. Record your findings so that they can be made use of in a general record of the state of the eyes of the children. And, further, he said, if your experience of this primitive work suggests to your minds some allied investigation, go ahead with that enquiry, and count the doing of it as part of your service.

That early work, based on Dr. Kerr's idea, was immensely fruitful, as every school medical officer knows, and as many ophthalmic surgeons know. Throughout the many years of my association with him as one of his part-time staff, there was no one whose attitude I found more encouraging. There was no one more willing to try out new ideas, or to help one in experimental work. I cannot give a better impression of this good mind of his than tell of the part he played in the origin of the now well-known Myope Classes or Sight Saving Classes. In 1902 he put me in charge of the London blind schools. Examination of these children showed that many of them were high myopes and not blind. I told him what I found. At a meeting of the Second International Congress of School Hygiene held in London in 1907, of which he was a secretary, he suggested I should give an account of what I had seen in these blind schools. By great good fortune the chairman of the Section was a member of the L.C.C. Education Committee, Miss Adler. She and Dr. Kerr gave full backing to the first experimental myope class. Without his backing there would have been none of them.

He had a keenly scientific mind and judgment; as was well shown by his work with the Society of Illuminating Engineers. In 1924 American engineers and architects produced a good work: "The Code of Lighting School Buildings." This was commented upon and extended in a masterly paper by Dr. Kerr at the meeting of the London Illuminating Engineering Society in London, 1926. He dealt with natural lighting. This paper of his became a real standard of reference. His book on "School Vision and the Myopic Scholar," and his great work "The Fundamentals of School Health," were notable pieces of work.

As a man Dr. Kerr was kindly and pleasant. He had the true sympathetic mind of a medical practitioner. He was a great and good colleague. His memory will live.

N. BISHOP HARMAN.