OBITUARY

J. VAN DER HOEVE

The whole world of ophthalmology has lost a great professional leader and a beloved friend by the death of Professor J. van der Hoeve. During the past few years his health was poor and he was becoming very frail, so that he fell victim to a road accident on April 26 last.

Van der Hoeve was one of the leading figures in our specialty during the last half-century. Born in 1878, he graduated at Leyden University in 1900 when he became assistant to Professor Koster. In 1913 he was appointed Professor of
Ophthalmology at the University of Gröningen, and in 1918 he assumed the Chair of his old school in Leyden where the greater part of his life’s work was done. His original contributions to ophthalmology during his long professional life were immense and continuous, and were recognized not only in his own country but throughout Europe. In Great Britain he held an honorary degree of the University of Edinburgh and was a recipient of the Sir William Mackenzie Medal for ophthalmic research. His Bowman Lecture in 1932 on Ocular Movements, a subject on which he wrote his doctorate thesis in 1902, will always remain classical. The breadth of his clinical interests and his unique ability to co-ordinate scattered observations were demonstrated by the fact that in the same year, in delivering the Doyne Memorial Lecture, he introduced the conception of “phakomatosis”, thereby integrating a number of syndromes characterized by their congenital origin, their hereditary incidence, and their widespread symptomatology in various parts of the body. His erudition outside the confines of his specialty was recognized by his being elected President of the Physical Section of the Royal Dutch Academy of Science in 1932.

To the present generation of ophthalmologists, however, van der Hoeve was probably known best for his influence in the international aspects of our specialty. A traveller to many lands and a welcome visitor in each, he was mainly responsible for the re-establishment of international relationships in ophthalmology after the disruption of the first World War, so that it was natural that in 1929 the first post-war International Congress should have been held in Holland under his chairmanship. At that time he was in the prime of his life and with his facility in languages, his genial courtesy, his unusual erudition, and his organizing ability, he stood out among his contemporaries as the universally acclaimed leader of his profession. Since that time his activity in international affairs and his immense capacity for making and maintaining friendships, as well as his professional excellence, progressively endeared him to a multitude of friends throughout the world, and these qualities were reflected in his being received into the honorary membership of some twenty national societies. In his later years, when physical frailties curbed his activities, he lost none of his endearing qualities, and now that he has gone he has left behind a universal memory unique in its intimacy and warmth.