



SYDNEY STEPHENSON

(1862 — 1923)

---

**CORRESPONDENCE**


---

**AMETROPIA: ITS PREVALENCE**


---

*To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY*

SIR,—In your last issue you review a short paper I wrote on "Visual Defects." In that paper the prevalence of ametropia in adults is roughly estimated at:—myopia 10 per cent. and hypermetropia 20 per cent. This is clearly an error and as your reviewer quotes these figures I wish you to allow me to acknowledge the slip. In adults we get four or five cases of hypermetropia to one of myopia. Long ago I altered the figures to 7 per cent. and 28 per cent., but this remains merely a surmise.

Yours truly,

J. A. WILSON.

GLASGOW,

*December 1923.*

---



---

**OBITUARIES**


---

**In Memoriam**


---

**SYDNEY STEPHENSON**

*Editor, BRITISH JOURNAL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY, 1917-1923*

SYDNEY HARRY STEPHENSON, whose death was announced in our last number, was born in 1862, the son of Dr. T. Appleby Stephenson, of Nottingham; his early years were spent in his native town and part of his education was received at the Nottingham High School, but most of it was obtained at Epsom College, which he entered in 1875, and where he stayed for four years. His medical training was obtained at the Middlesex, St. Mary's, and the London Hospitals, and at Edinburgh University, where he graduated M.B., C.M. in 1884, having previously taken the

L.S.A. in London. He passed the F.R.C.S.(Edin.) in 1889, and proceeded to the D.O.(Oxon.) in 1907. This last diploma he took, chiefly, to encourage the younger men.

His father had had much to do with the founding of the Nottingham Eye Hospital, and he himself had gained some experience in ophthalmology before he came to London; after qualification he worked principally at the Royal Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital, in the clinic of Mr. Adams Frost, an honoured master.

Apart from his hospital appointments of ophthalmic surgeon to the Evelina Hospital; King Edward's Memorial Hospital, Ealing; the Queen's Hospital for Children and Queen Charlotte's Hospital, and his private practice, the main features of Stephenson's life fall naturally into two divisions, his work as a journalist and that in connexion with the schools for children suffering from contagious eye disease in the metropolitan area; this latter work was of real and permanent value to the public and will be dealt with first. In the summer of 1886 an epidemic of trachoma broke out in the schools of the London district and Stephenson was placed in control of the ophthalmia school at Norwood; for two years he worked there and by segregating those afflicted with trachoma and placing them under the care of a resident governess he was able to improve the health of the children attending the schools enormously, while ensuring their education. In 1890, a similar outbreak occurred at the Metropolitan Poor Law Schools at Hanwell, and he was appointed to deal with it; an isolation block, designed to accommodate 400 children was built, and as a consequence the percentage of trachoma at Hanwell declined from 33 per cent. in 1889 to 0.6 per cent. in 1896, while again the education of the children, whom he loved, was continued. In this year Stephenson was invited by the Local Government Board to make an inspection of all the children attending the Poor Law Schools in the Metropolis. He found a percentage of 5.72 affected with trachoma, and his advice that these infected children should be housed in two hospital schools on the "cottage" or "small block" plan was adopted by the authorities. His fourteen years' work at Hanwell bore rich fruit, and the Metropolitan Asylums Board adopted the same policy in the establishment of the trachoma schools at Swanley and Brentwood.

Of Stephenson's work as a journalist much might be written, for he wrote much. Besides his well-known book on Ophthalmic Nursing, his monograph on Ophthalmia Neonatorum, which incorporated the Middlemore prize essay for 1907 (the language of which has been likened to that of Macaulay) of the British Medical Association; and his translations from the French and

German, there was *The Ophthalmoscope*. This journal he founded in 1903, and fourteen volumes appeared under his editorship before it was incorporated with the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital Reports and the Ophthalmic Review in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY. *The Ophthalmoscope* rapidly became the most widely circulating journal in British Ophthalmology; Stephenson's amazing energy and capacity for work, together with a methodical mind of a very high order enabled him to maintain the highest standard of utility in this publication from start to finish, for *The Ophthalmoscope* was Sydney Stephenson, and when the journals were amalgamated in 1917 it was natural that he should be appointed editor. As editor he commanded the respect and, indeed, the affection of ophthalmologists throughout the English-speaking world; it would not be unfair to say that he was one of the principal liaison officers between English, French and American ophthalmology of his time.

Those fourteen volumes of *The Ophthalmoscope* together with the first seven volumes of the BRITISH JOURNAL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY form his best memorial, *monumentum aere perennius*.

It remains to speak of his other interests: he was a many-sided man; his connexion with the Oxford Ophthalmological Congress, first as Secretary, and after the death of Mr. Doyne, as Master, was a long and honourable one. He was a great Master; his efforts, ably seconded by those of the Deputy Master, Mr. Adams, and Secretary, Mr. Cridland, were responsible for the unvarying success of these annual meetings; the Congress under his guidance, was always a harmonious one; never was a carping word spoken and the youngest member was made to feel himself on equal terms with the eldest.

Together with Colonel Tubby he founded the Society for the study of Disease in Children, which is now merged in the Section for Diseases of Children of the Royal Society of Medicine: this he regarded as his favourite achievement. For thirty-six years he was a member of the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom, a society which he served in the capacity of Secretary, Member of Council, and Vice-President; he rarely missed a meeting and his papers and contributions to discussions were marked by an extreme lucidity of expression and by a thoroughness in compilation, the result of an extensive knowledge of the literature of his profession, and very accurate clinical observation.

He was an ophthalmic referee under the Workmen's Compensation Act for a great many circuits, not only in the London County Courts, for his range extended into Kent and most of the home counties. Stephenson had a famous memory, he was able to read through an article and then repeat it word for word, this was a family gift, for an uncle of his had the same ability. In speaking

in public he had a gift of oratory and this coupled with a beautiful voice and ready wit made him always worth hearing.

In practice, he had most of the gifts which make for success; tact, sympathy and loyalty to colleagues and to his ideals; he never forgot a kindness, and his innumerable acts of kindness to others will be remembered by the recipients "until time itself with them shall be no more."

As a young man, Stephenson enjoyed good health, he was a member of the Epsom College Rugby football fifteen, and captained the Edinburgh side for one year; he was a very fine swimmer, an expert fisherman and a good boxer, he was also fond of cycling, but he was, of late years, rather lame in one leg. His health broke up eight years ago, and it is remarkable that he was able to carry on as he did in the face of physical disabilities which would have daunted most people. His strength of character was well shown by the splendid pluck with which he faced the troubles of the last years. His long illness came to an end quite peacefully on December 15, 1923.

To his widow and two children, the sympathy of ophthalmologists all the world over will go out in their bereavement.

#### AVE ATQUE VALE.

"Content thee, howso'er, whose days are done;  
There lies not any troublous thing before,  
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
All waters as the shore."

WE have to record, with deep regret, the death of Dr. Stirling who was our representative on the Editorial Committee for Montreal.

Dr. Stirling was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1859. He received his primary education in that town, and subsequently went to Edinburgh for his medical studies, graduating there in 1884. After serving for a time as a resident in the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh, Dr. Stirling proceeded to the Continent and pursued his studies at Vienna and Berlin, and afterwards in London, being attached for a time to the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital. Returning to Canada in 1887 Dr. Stirling took up practice in Montreal. He was professor of ophthalmology at Bishop's College, which then maintained a medical faculty in Montreal, afterwards merged with McGill. He succeeded the late Dr. Frank Buller in the similar chair at the McGill University and became ophthalmologist to the Royal Victoria Hospital. He also held the appointments of oculist

and aurist to the Montreal General Hospital, and consulting oculist and aurist to the Montreal Dispensary and the Montreal Foundling and Baby Hospital.

Dr. Stirling was admitted to the *ad eundem* degree of the M.D., C.M. at McGill in 1911. He possessed a professional reputation which extended far beyond Montreal, and he was much esteemed and deeply regretted by both his professional colleagues and his patients.

---



---

## NOTES

---

**Deaths**

WE regret to record the recent deaths of Sir JOHN TWEEDY and of Mr. A. C. ROPER. We hope to publish obituary notices in

our next number.

The deaths of the following ophthalmic surgeons in the United States are announced:—JOHN W. MURPHY, of Cincinnati, Emeritus Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Cincinnati, aged 67; ROBERT SMITH DOAK of Nashville, Tennessee, aged 57; WILLIAM L. WOOD of Portland, Oregon, aged 59; GEORGE EDGAR BENSON, of Minneapolis, aged 46; LEWIS S. DIXON of Boston, aged 77; HERBERT HARLAN of Baltimore, aged 67, a member of the National Board of Medical Examiners; JAMES H. CRAWFORD of Martin, Ga, aged 51.

\* \* \* \* \*

**New Year's Day Honours**

AMONG the recipients of honours in the list for New Year's Day occurs the name of HENRY LINDO FERGUSON, M.D., C.M.G., who has been made a Knight Bachelor. Sir Henry Lindo Ferguson is well known in New Zealand, where he is Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Otago. He is a member of the editorial committee of the BRITISH JOURNAL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY. We tender him our hearty congratulations.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Appointments**

MR. DAVID WILSON, late honorary ophthalmic surgeon to the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, has been appointed honorary ophthalmic surgeon to the Torbay and Newton Abbot Hospitals and oculist to the Torquay Education Authority.

Dr. GORDON RENWICK has been appointed honorary assistant surgeon to the Royal Eye Hospital, Manchester.