

OBITUARY

JAMES GRAY KYD

C.B.E., F.F.A., F.R.S.E.
1882—1968

James Kyd served as President of the Faculty from 1944 to 1946.

He was born on 9th August 1882 and was the son of an actuary, his father being Thomas Kyd, who had been admitted a Fellow of the Faculty in 1877 and who later became Resident Manager of the Northern Assurance Company in Aberdeen.

After completion of his education at Aberdeen Grammar School, James Kyd joined the staff of the "Northern" in Aberdeen and in 1903 enrolled as a Faculty student. He completed the Faculty examinations and was admitted as a Fellow in 1907.

In 1912 he left Aberdeen and joined the Civil Service. Around that time the introduction of the National Insurance Scheme had resulted in actuarial developments at national level and Kyd may well have felt that his prospects in this sphere would be greater than in insurance, or the type of work may have had particular attraction for him. His first appointment was as Actuary to the Irish Insurance Commission in Dublin. He remained in Dublin until 1921, when he came to a similar post in London. In 1926 he was appointed Principal Actuary, a post which he later combined with that of Secretary to the Government Actuary's Department. He was appointed Registrar-General for Scotland in 1937 and held this position until he retired in 1948.

As a result of the war, Kyd, while Registrar-General, did not have to deal with a census of the population, but his annual reports on Scottish population matters always made interesting and topical reading. Perhaps he had what might be called a "public relations flair" because he often succeeded in drawing from the prosaic statistics salient facts which caught the public imagination: so much so, in fact, that one of his annual reports ran to a second edition! He was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on Population which submitted its report in 1949.

Although he resided outwith Edinburgh until 1937 he managed to give service to the Faculty. He acted for a period as an Examiner and served as an ordinary Member of Council for a term. In 1937 he submitted a Paper to the Faculty on "The Mortality Experience of Scotland 1930-1932" and later had a further term as a Member

of Council before being elected President in 1944. He was the first and, in fact, up to the time these notes were written, the only President whose business interests were entirely unconnected with life assurance.

His term of office as President coincided with the cessation of the 1939-1945 War and it fell to him to lead in the recommencement of the Faculty's peace-time activities. Under his guidance this was achieved smoothly and quickly, the breadth and scope of Sessional Meetings during his Presidential term being a fair indication of this.

Kyd's "public relations flair" has already been mentioned and this, coupled with a desire to expand the bounds of actuarial activity, led him to conceive the idea of bringing together the young actuary as a practical statistician and the individual who had amassed data on a subject but who lacked the time or knowledge to get at the facts, if any, behind that data. As a result of consultation with the Scottish Universities, then four in number, the "Scottish Statistical Research Bureau" was formed. The Bureau ran with reasonable but somewhat limited success for a time and then faded out for reasons which need not be gone into here, but which were entirely outside the control of the Faculty. While, therefore, this project was in its initial objective a failure it probably had side values in the contacts made with the Universities and the Medical Faculties.

In 1940 James Kyd was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and in 1942 became a C.B.E. In 1945 along with the then Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Tom Johnston) he was instrumental in forming the privately financed "Scots Ancestry Research Society." He was the first Chairman of the Society and retained this position up to the time of his death.

To the casual observer or passing acquaintance James Kyd could perhaps have seemed an austere, aloof and even pedantic individual. This would have been an entirely wrong impression. He liked the company of his fellows and, unless the discussion was a serious one, could be relied upon to import into the conversation his own particular brand of pawky humour: even in a serious debate he had the ability to negotiate the awkward corner by a skilful lightening of the argument.

He loved the open air and hill walking was one of his main hobbies. He knew the hills around Edinburgh intimately but seemed specially fond of the Moorfoots. However, as befitted one born in the North of Scotland he was no stranger to the Scottish mountains and, in

fact, he was author of a small book entitled *Drove Roads and Bridle Paths around Braemar*.

In later life, an eye disease curtailed his vision, but a successful operation after a time largely restored the keenness of his sight. On being asked what he valued most following this restoration his answer was that of the countryman—"It is wonderful to see again clearly the green of the grass!"

Some time after retiral he and his wife removed to the south of England for domestic reasons. Nevertheless he paid fleeting visits to Edinburgh from time to time and those who knew him best would probably agree he appeared to change little over the years. Always of slim and spare build, he did not seem to get any older: he retained much of the spring in his step and he never lost his interest in people, in events and in his surroundings. Thus he kept a youthful outlook both mentally and physically so that it seems appropriate when one recalls James Kyd to mind also to tend to recall the lines with which he concluded his Presidential Address to the Faculty:

"Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven."

These words epitomize the man: they form a fitting epitaph.

E. W.