

Abram Tucker Kerr

January 7, 1873 — August 15, 1938

After years of faithful service to Cornell University, Abram Tucker Kerr died on August 15, 1938. He was born in Buffalo, New York, on January 7, 1873. There he attended the public schools. After obtaining his B.S. at Cornell in 1895 he returned to Buffalo as a medical student and received the M.D. degree from the University of Buffalo in 1897. While studying medicine he was student assistant in histology and pathology and in 1898-1900 was acting and adjunct professor of Anatomy in the University of Buffalo. He studied at Göttingen in 1899 and at Johns Hopkins in 1899-1900. He was called to Cornell in 1900 as assistant professor of Anatomy and became professor of that subject in 1904. He became the administrative head of the Ithaca division of the Medical College in 1902 and held that office for thirty-six years.

In addition to his heavy load of teaching and administrative duties he found time to serve the University whenever the need arose. No sacrifice of time or effort was too great when the interests of Cornell were involved. Older members of the faculty will recall with feeling his unselfish services in one of the greatest emergencies this University has ever been called upon to face—the tragic typhoid epidemic in 1903. They will recall, too, his calm, efficient handling of the crisis that came with the influenza epidemic in 1918. Dr. Kerr played a leading part in the reorganization of the Cornell Infirmary; to him its staff turned constantly for advice. He acted as chairman of the Trustees' Committee on Hygiene and Sanitation from its formation in 1909 to his death. He organized the health services of Cornell and served as acting professor of Hygiene in 1920-21 and again in 1935-36. His organizing capacities were called upon to help solve the traffic problem on the campus, which had become acute with the rapid increase in the use of the automobile.

He was deeply interested in the health problems of the City of Ithaca and served from 1911 to 1912 as president and subsequently for several terms as vice-president of the board of trustees of the Ithaca Memorial Hospital. By his colleagues in the medical profession he was made president of the Tompkins County Medical Society in 1910. As a member of the executive committee of the American Association of Anatomists from 1910-1914, and as a contributor to standard textbooks on Anatomy, he played his part in the development of his chosen field.

But in spite of his wide interests and varied activities the Ithaca Division of the Medical College, which he served devotedly for thirty-eight years, remained closest to his heart and to it he devoted his best efforts. He survived its dissolution a little more than two months.