Obituary of Dr. William Bartlett Brebner

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Dr. William Bartlett Brebner, formerly of Toronto, and widely known in that city, died on November 9, 1932, in New York following an accidental laboratory infection. Two weeks previously Dr. Brebner was bitten by a monkey which he had under observation in connection with an important investigation on infantile paralysis. Complications followed, and he finally succumbed to a paralytic condition defying the best efforts of his co-workers.

Dr. Brebner was a son of the late Dr. James Brebner, former Registrar of the University of Toronto. News of his death was received as a shock in many different circles in which he was favourably known. Only 29 years of age, Dr. Brebner was highly regarded by the university faculty, by the Toronto medical fraternity, and by many classmates of the University of Toronto, where he received his medical training. His untimely end is regarded as a distinct loss to science and society, as he was known to be on the threshold of significant medical discoveries.

Born in Toronto, the late Dr. Brebner entered the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Toronto in 1919 at the age of 16. Illness kept him from college for a year, and he was finally awarded the M.B. degree in 1926. In 1927 the university granted him the degree of B.Sc.Med. for graduate work. He then forged ahead in the medical field, publishing scientific memoirs from the University of Toronto, Washington University of St. Louis, and the Lister Institute, London. At the time of his death Dr. Brebner was attached to the Health Department of New York City and was on the staff of New York University.

His widow is the former Miss Mildred Davidson, of Toronto. Other immediate relatives are a brother, Prof. J. Bartlett Brebner, of Columbia University, and a sister, Mrs. Mary Strong, of Toronto. D.A. Brebner and Miss Jessie Brebner, uncle and aunt reside in Toronto.

Dr. E. S. Ryerson, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, said of Dr. Brebner “His is another example of a life sacrificed in the interests of science. Dr. Brebner displayed a remarkably fine personality.”

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