

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### JAMES WILLIAM MCBAIN (1882 – 1953)

James William McBain, M.A., Ph.D., Sc.D., F.R.S., emeritus professor of Chemistry in this University, died at his home on March 12, 1953, after a short illness resulting from a heart attack which culminated in a cerebral hemorrhage.

Professor McBain was born in Chatham, New Brunswick, on March 22, 1882, and studied at the University of Toronto, graduating with the A.B. degree in 1903. After a period of study under the direction of Quinke at Heidelberg, and after receiving the Ph. D. degree from that university, McBain began his long academic career at the University of Bristol, England, in 1906. From 1906 until 1919 he was lecturer in physical chemistry, and from 1919 until 1926 he was the first occupant of the Leverhulme Chair of chemistry. In 1926 McBain was invited to become professor of chemistry at Stanford University and he held this position until he became emeritus professor in 1947. At the personal request of Prime Minister Nehru, Professor McBain undertook the task of building and directing the National Chemical Laboratory at Poona, India, and had returned home only a few months prior to his fatal illness.

Professor McBain was elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1925, and held membership and office in numerous scientific societies. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Brown University in 1923 and by Bristol University in 1928. In 1939 the Royal Society accorded him signal distinction by the award of its Humphrey Davy medal.

Professor McBain was married to Evelyn McBain, who was also for some years a member of the faculty of the Department of Chemistry, and who survives him with two children, Janet Quin McBain and John Keith McBain.

At the outset of McBain's career in colloid science, the little surface chemistry then known was commonly held to be a part of classical physics and colloidal phenomena were an empirical and rather unimportant part of inorganic chemistry. McBain lived to see the subject grow both in extent and scientific stature, to which he greatly contributed by his long insistence on the introduction of thermodynamic description into a, previously, qualitative field of study. His greatest contributions were in adsorption and in the study of colloidal electrolytes, a field which he discovered and made his own. His extreme productivity is attested by the more than 450 scientific papers and two textbooks which he published and two important books in preparation.

McBain's outstanding part in colloid science rapidly achieved international fame and made Stanford a center of research for students from many countries. Generous and competent in teaching and in the direction of research, McBain guided the studies of many scores of students working for the Ph.D. degree, and the influence which he exerted on colloid science by his own efforts and those of his many students is, and will for many years continue to be, very great. His influence on the future social and economic development of India, through the

National Chemical Laboratory is already being felt and will grow rapidly. His work in this latter institution sprang from his great willingness to serve his fellow man wherever and however he could. At an age when most men would turn without reluctance to a period of restful retirement, McBain never hesitated in accepting the challenge of laying the firm foundations for widespread development of industrial chemistry in India, and brought to the task all his missionary zeal and energy.

In his personal life McBain was a generous and warm-hearted man who extended to his students not merely all the resources of his intellect, but genuine and lasting friendship also. Despite his great labors in chemistry he found time for many hobbies, notably gardening, and was active in the social life of this campus where he had many close friends.

A great teacher, a great research worker, McBain proudly held aloft the lamp of learning: this institution and science in general is the richer for his life and sorrowful at his passing.

George S. Parks, Chairman  
Paul H. Kirkpatrick  
Eric Hutchinson