

IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR GEORGE WELLS KNIGHT.

Read at the meeting of the Kit Kat Club
April 19, 1932, by George W. Rightmire.

Professor Knight was a member of the Kit Kat Club from its beginning; he prized his membership highly and engaged enthusiastically in all its activities. Here he found a type of social - intellectual association which held a very strong appeal; here progress could be made in the understanding of cultural or general affairs. He had a fine response and an enthusiastic advance provided only the association were keyed in sympathy with the higher and more

select human aspirations. He derived keen enjoyment from the preparation of a subject for discussion and its presentation. He was always an interested listener and joined with pleasure in the comment and debate inspired by a paper at a meeting of the Club. He was the President of the Club in the season 1925-26.

Professor Knight's interest in government and public affairs was deep and abiding; how our experiment in Democracy is proceeding and accomplishing its declared purposes was for him a matter of the most serious moment - actually a

personal responsibility. He frequently came forward with proposals for improving public administration and saw in his membership in the Ohio Constitutional Convention of 1912 an opportunity to do constructive things with far-reaching effects. He was adapted for public service of the type required in our critical period between the Revolution and the creation of constitutional government, but had none of the purely "political" aptitudes. If we had to choose what manner of man we should most prefer to be, which of us would hesitate as between these two types of public man?

Professor Knight's interest in education on all levels was innate and perennial; he deeply shared in the discussions and keenly felt the responsibility incident to the support and progress of the schools and colleges, and wrote much in this field. He was always proudest of his study of education in the Northwest Territory which he worked out in notable completeness for his doctor's degree.

At the Ohio State University his name can be found written large in the records of faculty debate and committee activities - in the very center of all scholastic movements

for well over forty years. His total contribution there does not yield to known methods of mensuration, it is one of the spiritual imponderables - felt but not physically perceived.

Professor Knight's approach to life and its relations was intellectual; he measured both persons and proposals from this viewpoint. One coming to him for conference or counsel knew instinctively that the discussion would start with fundamentals and all factors and conduct involved or to be involved would have to be justified on a basis of reason. When this point was passed he would summarize the elements in

the situation in a masterly way. His manner of asking a question at once put the other party on the defensive and he appreciated the necessity of searching himself thoroughly before answering. The question at once threw the premises into the foreground and demanded the best logic he could muster.

This was the mainspring of his power as a teacher. The student was constantly thrown back upon himself and he was required to exercise his mentality to the limit. Whatever intellectual ability the student had was completely

called into action in Professor Knight's classes. To be called upon for recitation was to the student an hour of trial, which if he were well prepared and had intellectual mobility, was a time of joy. But if he lacked preparation or had a vagrant mentality he underwent an ordeal; almost "stood at Armageddon". There was no unkindness on Professor Knight's part; it was his natural method of stimulating thought and encouraging learning. He was happiest when in the middle of a discussion with a group of intellectually keen and aggressive students, and they were stimulated to the utmost coordinated use of all their abilities. Many students felt that a recitation hour with Professor Knight was a period of palpable intellectual growth!

His class room techniques were perfectly adapted to his intellectual procedure and evidenced his own method of attack upon a problem of learning; they were entirely logical and brought all important elements of the matter into the consideration in the order of their contribution to the question. In his time he taught in numerous fields, yet his methods were always the same and always led the student to the same clear understanding of the subject. Clarity of thinking and consequently of statement was a fundamental requirement of his teaching. He had supreme confidence in his ability to understand and to interpret to students whatever fell within the boundaries of his favorite fields of

learning, and the students had implicit trust in this capacity.

For many years he was a very active member of the First Congregational Church and was devoted to the liberal religious and intellectual leadership of Washington Gladden. He believed that the church has also a social and a civic mission, and manifested much interest in its development in these directions.

For those of us who knew him well he was a complete friend, a sympathetic counselor, an inspiration to intellectual honesty, and always, down through the years,

ready to help, and affected with genuine pride in any progress which his old students or friends might make.

Now that he is gone the total of what he meant to us is assuming clearer and more impressive definition.
