

Tribute prepared and read by  
H. C. Shetron at the meeting of the  
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Charles Burleigh Galbreath--1858-1934. A simple statement this, of itself; but on second thought it becomes much more than a mere epitaph.

For a human life to span three-quarters of a century is sufficiently unusual; but when the life of a Charles Burleigh Galbreath parallels the most remarkable three-quarter century period the world has known, the result is epochal. Time of itself, like an unheard sound in the wilderness, means nothing; but when time is coupled with human activity, we have history.

In view of these facts one is tempted, in preparing a sketch of the life of our lamented friend, to exceed the justification of the present occasion. The temptation is to essay an evaluation of the man with respect to the times in which he lived; in other words, to write a history of the period extending from 1858 to 1934. Needless to say this undertaking lies entirely outside the ability of your speaker and the scope of this paper, and therefore is left to the historian and the biographer.

The salient facts regarding the life of Professor Galbreath are matters of record in several appropriate publications, and need not be repeated here. However, as a matter of record for the Kit Kat Club, they are appended to this sketch. In the end, then, I shall content myself with offering to this small circle of friends of our departed fellow-member a few random observations and reminiscences of my own and of others who have known him longer and more intimately.

Recalling the list of Professor Galbreath's activities and interests, we find that among other accomplishments he ranked high as a scholar, teacher, librarian, historian, poet, and--humanitarian. Without attempting to comment on all of his activities but speaking entirely at random, I shall set down whatever thoughts present themselves and when the allotted space is exhausted I shall desist.

During the course of our daily association as coworkers; seated together at noonday luncheon (when breakfast cereal and a bottle of milk were invariably adjuncts of his menu); seeing him walking appreciatively among the flowers of my garden, or in his own as he improvised shelters for the rabbits which nibbled his cabbages and enlarged openings above his doorframe so that vagrant bees and birds might share his domicile; I came to know "C.B." as we affectionately called him, as well perhaps as any other friend of his later years. As we sometimes will, we came unconsciously to accept him as something permanent, so virile in mind and body he seemed, so calm and philosophic in the midst of life's limitations and uncertainties; his unhurried manner, his resonant voice and his many little mannerisms (as the boyish scratching of the head in perplexity) seeming to defy or rather to ignore change and the passing of time. And then

"One morn I missed him on the 'customed hill  
Along the heath, and near his fav'rite tree;  
Another came, nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he."

Born under most favorable auspices with respect to time, place and family heritage, and richly endowed by nature both physically and mentally, no individual of any generation other than his own has participated more fully in the filming of the moving picture of human history.

Arriving at the age of consciousness of self and surroundings, of men and movements, he often reminisced at length on his personal recollections of the War of the Rebellion and on impressions received from immediate participants in that struggle. Coming from a section of Ohio noted for its abolition activities he was particularly concerned, even in his later years, with the anti-slavery movement, John Brown's raid, the Underground Railroad, or with any-and everything pertaining to the freeing of the negro slaves. One of the happiest days of his life was when he discovered, secured and triumphantly brought to the Museum the quaint old wooden coffin in which Edwin Coppock, young Ohio member of Brown's raiders, was buried following his official execution. To the amusement of the Museum staff, "C. B." never lost an opportunity of proudly conducting visitors to this exhibit, material evidence of the romantic John Brown's raid.

Professor Galbreath observed and interpreted the kaleidoscopic events of that remarkable period of reconstruction and development following the Civil War during which he saw the world of his boyhood completely change. Then before the first quarter of a new century had passed he experienced the throes and anxieties of the first World War, in which were a son, several proteges and numerous friends and acquaintances. Naturally his sympathies toward the participants were boundless, in keeping with his broad capabilities, as is evidenced by his "In Flanders Fields--An Answer" and numerous other patriotic contributions included in his published poems. And once more, in his later years, he witnessed his familiar world undergoing complete metamorphosis. For a time, contrary to his usual optimism, he was

outspokenly pessimistic as to the fate of human civilization, feeling that the balance between world welfare and destruction was very delicate. During the past year, I am glad to record, he was greatly encouraged by the prospective situation.

While the teaching profession (successively as teacher, college professor and college president) engaged Professor Galbreath's early mature years, pedagogy as such could not for long suffice as a satisfactory vehicle for his versatile mind. Nevertheless throughout his life, to those who knew him best, he remained at heart and instinctively a teacher. Throughout the years and to the time of his passing he continued to make it possible for deserving boys and girls, lacking necessary funds, to find their way through school and college. A specific instance is the cherished recollection of those associated with him as State Librarian. An immigrant Greek lad of eight visited the State House as a newsboy. Shy, diffident, he knew only enough English to announce his paper and its cost. "C. B." became interested in the prospective American citizen and day after day sat with him at his desk teaching him additional English words. Thus encouraged and with added confidence, the boy grew to useful young manhood, always retaining a niche in the hospitable Galbreath home. He went to the great war. Sometime later his name appeared in the list of those fallen on the field of battle. The Galbreaths mourned him as dead. And then later, as recounted recently in the local press, there came a knock at the door of the Galbreath residence. It was the erstwhile Greek newsboy. His death had been greatly exaggerated.

While the teaching profession long ago has been absolved from the absent-minded professor myth, the following incident, related by a

close friend of the family, is characteristic of the subject of this sketch. The late William Jackson Armstrong who, I believe, was consul general to Europe under Grant, visited in Columbus and was a guest in the Galbreath home. An ardent outdoor enthusiast, the general prevailed upon "C. B." to accompany him on a fishing trip to Buckeye Lake. They boarded a traction car, intending to dismount at Hebron; but so busily engaged in discussion were they that presently they found themselves in Zanesville, the end of the division. Undismayed, they boarded a return car for Hebron; but when again their thoughts descended from Olympic heights, they were back in the Capital city. But always, they reasoned, there must be a way out. There was. It was not until a week later that General Armstrong, ending his visit, found himself weighed down by a guilty conscience. He confessed to his hostess that the fishes delivered to her had been purchased at the local fish market.

It seems almost sacrilege to neglect comment on Professor Galbreath as an historian, a poet and an authority on political, legislative and parliamentary procedure; of the long line of notables, state and national, who were his friends, consultants and confidants. But one could continue endlessly on any one of these themes.

It will be noted that this sketch is frankly eulogistic and, in the very nature of things could hardly be anything less. Certainly Professor Galbreath possessed what commonly are termed faults, since he was pre-eminently human; but these so pale into insignificance alongside his many virtues as to be negligible. Moreover, since

the Bard of Avon has declared that "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones", it behooves us to eulogize our friend; otherwise, the evil element being so decidedly lacking, the future might well hold for him nothing but oblivion.

In closing, I quote briefly from a description of Greenlawn Cemetery written some years ago by the subject of this sketch. The quotation not only is an example of the impressive literary style of its author, but, as his friends will perceive, it contains something strikingly suggestive of his own funeral obsequies and conditions prevailing at the time. Had Charles Burleigh Galbreath written his own epitaph and in it attempted to voice his personal philosophy he could not, it appears to me, have done better.

"Beautiful in winter, when the earth is robed in white; beautiful in the springtime, when the grass comes creeping everywhere, when buds open, and the robin and the bluebird are heard among the trees; beautiful in the summer twilight, when the foliage is dense and green, when the katydid in the tree top in staccato song answers to the chirp of the cricket below, when the well-kept mounds are decked with flowers, "sweet prophecies of the resurrection"; and beautiful in the autumn sunshine, when the circuit of the seasons is complete, when earth and sky seem to rest from their labors, when unseen hands release the October-tinted leaves and scatter them silently and tenderly above the graves; - yes, beautiful the whole year round is Green Lawn, the silent city, where strivings end, where peace is perpetual, and where mortals on their way to a better estate find a fitting abode for the night in this many-chambered mansion of rest.

Hither have come the representatives of every walk of life. Among them are those once eminent in the affairs of the city, the state and the Republic. Of these it were superfluous to speak. Their deeds have been recorded. Their place in local history at least is secure. \* \* \*

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."