



Alfred L. Bacharach

ALFRED LOUIS BACHARACH, M.A., F.R.I.C.

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Obituary Notice

ALFRED LOUIS BACHARACH, MA, FRIC

(11 August 1891–16 July 1966)

Alfred Bacharach was a founder member of The Nutrition Society and before that belonged to the small band that called into existence in 1940 the Informal Conference of Nutrition Workers from which The Nutrition Society was to arise in 1942. The yellowing bits of wartime paper carrying the early correspondence, agenda, minutes and reports of the informal body are thick with Alfred's name and testify the gusto, inventiveness and wisdom with which he threw himself into this task. Bacharach carried high office in The Nutrition Society, and was its first Honorary Treasurer from 1942 to 1952, a Council Member from 1952 to 1953 and from 1956 to 1959, and finally President from 1959 to 1962. He discharged these duties with the grace, easy mastery and wit that characterized all his public activities whatever they may have been, and their ambit was large. But to my mind it is as a member of the Editorial Board and by his written and spoken word, be it as office bearer, speaker or author, that Bacharach made his most lasting, most precious and most important contribution to the Society. If with this man, who was so interested, erudite and creative in so many fields, it is possible to speak of *violon d'Ingres* in the singular, I am sure that the cultivation of the English language was his foremost and enduring passion, and I know that his mastery of English has made a lasting impact on the standard and standing of the *British Journal of Nutrition* and the *Proceedings of The Nutrition Society*. In 1949, despite his heavy tresorial duties, he was drafted on to the Editorial Board, which he graced until he had to retire under the new by-laws of the Society in 1965. Having said long ago that 'language is the most important tool the chemist possesses', he went about preaching his dogma with the usual Bacharachian verve to his editorial colleagues, to contributors to Journal and Proceedings, and to the public at large at meetings of the Society. I will say unashamedly and with pride that he taught me much, often in the hard way, in my long years as editor of the Society's publications, and I know that he did likewise to other people on the Board, with some benefit we trust to the clarity of the Society's written word. Immersed as he was in music, and with a natural mathematical bent, he wielded his favourite tool with a deep perception of harmony and logical orderliness. Naturally fastidious, he was repelled by slovenly thinking and its sloppy presentation, and in his editorial work said so (and wrote) with disarming candour. There were many anxious moments in the editorial office when the inimitable marginal notes to fellow editors on typescripts, carrying Bacharachian admonishments and sometimes invective, could not be prudently and completely erased. Yet such was the guileless gusto of his remarks and their elegant force, and such was the acknowledged expertise of the man, that seldom did the castigated take offence. That is why I often put him to charm and pacify in hand-

to-hand combat irascible authors by the disarming frankness of his erudite wit. So sharp were his weapons that wounds to pride hurt little and healed rapidly. We, his old colleagues on the Editorial Board, have each our treasured collection of Bacharachian apophthegms. My favourite, and it is not easy to name one in this priceless collection, is his *cri de coeur* after having edited one in a series of papers by a world-famous authority unimpeachably presented but dull as dishwater: 'For the life of me I cannot see what these figures show other than themselves'.

It was obvious that he should have been asked with Professor R. C. Garry to draft the first rules and by-laws of The Nutrition Society, and they did noble work. Bacharach for many years represented the Society on the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee and seldom missed a meeting. He was, I understand, prominent in the discussions, as one may imagine, and was for a number of years a member of the Steering Committee that was responsible for drawing up the programme of speakers. Though directed at other people, his delightful *Notes on the Written Word* to Divisional and Departmental Heads at Glaxo Laboratories Ltd, his place of work, and the equally delightful lecture on *Writing Wrongs*, which he gave here and abroad, must be known to many members of The Nutrition Society and deserve their place with the writings of Fowler, Gowers and Partridge. His book on *Science and Nutrition*, published in 1938, is still green as ever and a joy to read, and the half dozen or so of books on medical and biological topics he edited in collaboration with others all bear his leonine mark.

Others have written about Bacharach in his other guises as food chemist, research worker, lover of music, and about his indefatigable educational work and his fight against poverty and malnutrition. He did so much for The Nutrition Society that it seems to me unnecessary to dilute this contribution by listing his other achievements. By the same token, I cannot write of Bacharach in a melancholy vein: he was intensely alive in whatever he did and so remains in our hearts.

S. K. KON