

Wayside Heroism

In Charity and Children Baptist Church Paper

By W. R. CULLOM
Rev. and Mrs. James Blackmore

Soon after Carl Townsend married Sibyl Braum of Yazoo City, Miss., some years ago he brought her out to Wake Forest to see us. When I met Sibyl, Carl asked me whether I could tell how many daughters-in-law I had. "No, Carl," said I, "but I am proud of every one of them and feel greatly honored and blessed in having the privilege of adding Sibyl to that charming group."

So far as I know every man and woman that I have ever taught at Wake Forest is my friend. This statement is one of my proud boasts. The fact that lies back of it constitutes my chief asset in the way of riches. Blessings on these dear friends wherever they are! May they carry on loyally and faithfully in the name and in the Spirit of Him whose we are and whom we serve!

There are certain ones of this number, however, who for one reason or another have kept in closer touch with me than some others have done. This is natural and to be expected. One of these who have thus kept in touch with me through the years is James Blackmore of Burgaw, N. C. When he was pastor

at King, when he was in training for the chaplaincy, after he became a chaplain, when they sent him across the seas, all the time that he was serving with the forces in Europe, when he was teaching at the "Little Seminary" in France and on and on through it all, James is one of that group that continued to keep in touch with me. His letters and his friendship have been a source of strength, of help and of blessing to me.

While serving with the Army in Wyoming he met a Red Cross worker, Ruth Lillick, and before too long they went over to her house in Iowa and were married. I confess that I felt a little apprehensive! Had he married a piece of wild west wind? Whither would she lead him? What would be the result? While he was in Europe Ruth came to Warsaw to visit his people. He wrote me of her being there, and I invited her to come over to Wake Forest to see James' Alma Mater. She declined to come because (as I learned later) of her timidity in going among strangers. But James brought Ruth to see me. They spent a day with me to my great joy and satisfaction. I saw that my boy had married a real woman, beautiful in face, comely in form and as gentle, modest and unassuming in spirit as ever one could be.

I thought that I saw more; viz. that James has a woman who would enrich his life by cooperating with him down to the very depths of her soul and to the last ounce of her strength. I was happy to have her take her place with Sibyl and the rest of them. They have been to see me several times, and each time I have seen her my first impression was made firmer, more definite and greatly enriched.

Soon after they became settled at Wilmington, at the Masonboro Church, they began to invite me down to spend a few days with them. My physical limitations and other things prevented my doing so until April 10, of this good year of our Lord 1948. Mr. Eustace Norfleet and his wife are in Wake Forest for a year or two completing a course of study begun when Mr. Norfleet and I were fellow students here in 1891-1892. These good people are from Wilmington, were going home on April 10, and took me with them. And so it was that my opportunity to visit James and Ruth came to me. When Caesar went in to Gaul in the long ago, all who have read his commentary on that campaign will recall with pleasure his laconic words: "I came I saw, I conquered." If I may paraphrase Caesar's words a little I would say, "I came, I saw, I was conquered!" I confess that my previous experience with these good people made me much easier prey for them than the Gauls were for Caesar! The plain truth is that it is hard for me to see how one could be with these friends for a few days without being conquered! Toward the close of my stay with them, I wrote my daughter who keeps house for me that I couldn't see how she and her husband could be more lovely to me than were James and Ruth. And that is putting it strongly, for I have good treatment at home.

While I was with these friends the mama cat gave birth to six precious little kittens; one of them was dead. The mama was black and four of the five kittens left were almost black. Each of the four had a little speck of white hair and one was a maltese. Four of them were named "Enie, Meni, Mini, Mo." The maltese was named Caesar. This seemed quite clever to me. And if I had had no other evidence of the estimate that I had formed of Ruth, her conduct and sentiment dealing with these kittens would have been amply sufficient evidence for an even stronger statement about her than I have given. One could almost have thought the little things were her babies! And how beautiful to see her cherish and manifest such lovely and simple tenderness. In a world which seems — much of it at least — to be writhing in force — brute force — I thank God for those who maintain and exercise the spirit of Him whose eye is on the sparrow.

It was my privilege to preach for the Masonboro saints on the morning of April 11, to lead their prayer service on Wednesday evening and to speak to the Sunday School teachers and officers in a supper meeting on Thursday night. Besides this, many of them called to see me, and were so gracious and kind to me. Without exception, they spoke in the highest terms of their young pastor and his wife. And when one notes how Jim loves his people, makes their sorrows, their cares, their difficulties his own, he

can understand their affection for him thoroughly, and would wonder if it were in the least otherwise. Many concrete cases of what I am saying were seen in the regular routine of the week that I was with them. I thank God again for such a beautiful combination of the shepherd heart, of the sage's wisdom, of the friend's devotion and of the Christian spirit as that I witnessed in my fellowship with these young people.

As suggested above, letters were passed between Jim and me while he was in Europe. Some of these letters bore suggestions that were the outcome of rich and varied and often trying experiences. One of these suggestions has to do with a matter that should sound a note of warning to the Christians of America. I'm referring to the way that Germany came to be in the plight of soul and life that caused them to thrust the world into the awful holocaust of horrors that has overwhelmed us for a generation and which threatens to continue indefinitely and even to grow worse as we proceed. I'm glad to be able to give this statement which I have in mind in James' own words. "We cannot have peace without justice, and we can have no justice apart from God. For justice is based on law, and law is based on ethics; and ethics flows from faith, and faith must ground itself in God. We are inclined to think that 'being good' is enough; that character training is sufficient for our children. They tried this in Germany and look at the results of such teaching. Three generations ago they lost their faith, a second generation lived in the twilight of that faith and still kept the ethics of that faith. But they could not give their children the ethics without the faith. Then came Hitler! The motive had perished, and the conscience was dimmed. The flower dies when the roots are cut. The prophet has warned us. 'Woe be to the nation that forgets God.'"

The parable of the empty house and unclean spirits works in today's world exactly as it did in the day of our Lord. (Matt. 12:43-45.)

I came home from Wilmington much encouraged. Under the leadership of Ed Chamblee and his fine colleagues, things much worth while are coming to pass in and around Wilmington. May this go on in a great way until the splendid dream of the sacrificial Pritchard, the heroic Kester, the cultured Hunt, the saintly Foster, the consecrated Sullivan and the younger ones who have followed and are still carrying on shall have been realized!

It was my privilege to preach for my long-time friend, Rev. T. H. King on the evening of April 11, in his lovely Winter Park Church. Brother King is one of our best men and is surrounded by a fine group of men and women. Blessings on these and all the rest.

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