

Because of Him

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College, '44

"There was a South of slavery and secession. That South is dead. There is a South of union and freedom. That South, thank God, is living, breathing, growing every hour." Some prominent person said that on some memorable occasion. Some reason or fact gave him ground for such words. If challenged, he probably could have proved them.

My grandfather could have proved them. He is the proof himself. He was a child of ten at the time of the Civil War and his varied experiences had all the dash and glamour one could desire.

His father freed his slaves before he donned his gray uniform and marched away to defend the South he loved.

The war ended, grandfather finished his education, established his business, reared his family, and retired to watch his grandchildren grow into true, steady, loyal Americans, as their parents before them. There is nothing unusual about this. Thousands of men had achieved more than grandfather—or had they?

My father died before I was born, and my mother and I made our home with my grandfather in a small town. It was not difficult for me to understand the close comradeship that existed between my grandfather and his children, for I knew the tales which my young imagination so eagerly lapped up were the well-loved ones told around the family circle years before.

There were tales of a young boy dashing madly to the pasture to drive the horses into the woods before the enemy found them. There was the day when he faced the blue column with a pistol in one hand and the bridle of the only remaining horse in the other, and threatened to shoot the first man who touched it. And the blue column marched away. I could almost see the small crib where his family hid their winter's supply of cornmeal. It seemed I was with him when he dug the dirt from the smokehouse

floor and boiled it to get salt. I was glad he helped the wounded Yankee lad to elude the pursuing rebels.

But these were but a few of the stories. Others were of Daniel, David, the baby Jesus, and an Easter morning. Before I was four I knew all the words to "Dixie," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the Twenty-third Psalm. I knew also that a negro was as good as I was, and deserved the same rights and privileges. I knew that the South had lost its war so that there would be a strong enough nation to deal with the Germans in '17-'18, and I knew that the German people were not to be blamed for what their leaders had done.

I wonder whether other boys who watched the invader cart off their pigs, chickens, and flour, leaving them nothing but cornmeal, ever explained to people that the South was wrong, too. I wonder whether, remembering their own hunger, other boys taught their children to give more than was demanded of them.

Aware, as our family is, of a sense of duty and honor, it is difficult for us to break the Golden Rule, which has been the only family law. Because my grandfather saw the effect, and endured the hardships of war—not ordinary war, but civil war—there is one family group which realizes that this country must stay strong enough, kind enough, and free enough for all kinds of people and religions. To this end we bend all our efforts, as did my grandfather.

Cadet Dances

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College, '44

Cadets come in three varieties: fair, worse, and the worst. Being No. 13 on team 27 of the G S O, I have met numerous cadets at the cadet dances that our team is required to attend on Wednesdays and Fridays of each week. Hopefully, I venture forth on said nights "to do or die for the dear, old G S O" (mostly, die).

Speaking of worse, I will mention only a few of the characters I invariably attract at each dance. Let there be a fat, red-faced cadet who pumps

his arms so vigorously I expect to strike oil, I get him. Let there be a wobbly, affectionate, red-nosed drunk who thinks of "dear old mother" when he sees my fixed Mona Lisa smile, I get him. If there is a short, little cadet that comes to my shoulder on his (usually my) tiptoes, I get him. He invariably asks, "How tall are you?"

"Oh, 'bout six feet."

"With or without stockings?"

At this point he is trying to shove me around like a moving van. Let there be a fugitive from Listerine with a dash of garlic added, I get him. This type usually leaves me breathless, if you know what I mean. If there is a truck driver from Pittsburgh who still likes to shove people around, I invariably get him. Let there be a Brooklyn taxi driver who enjoys bragging about the Dodgers, I get him. If there is an Italian from the Bronx full of "youse guys" and "no kidding, kid," I get him. I have finally decided my magic (?) No. 13 draws them all.

Perhaps the worst are the middle-aged married men who dote on talking of Junior. They usually do a dragging two-step, that went out with the bustle, to "Rumboogie." Then there are always the jitterbugs from New York who insist on dashing me off one cadet onto another.

Fate has sent me a few reprieves in the form of "fair" cadets. By "fair" I mean the rough and ready ranch hand from Texas, the solemn undertaker from Boston, the bespectacled professor of math from the University of South Dakota, the playboy from Chicago who hasn't quite learned that college and the army are two different matters, the serious artist from Philadelphia, and the cadet from Utah. How did I know he really was a Mormon when I blithely asked him how many wives he had?

I laugh at some of these cadets, yes. I also realize that they are giving up much to help see this war through. Since I cannot knit and I cannot fight, the least I can do is to have them step on my feet, while I grin and step right back on theirs.