

In Memoriam.

IT IS with very deep regret that we read in the QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF THE FRONTIER NURSING SERVICE that First Lieutenant John Cabell Breckinridge, U.S.M.C., was killed in action in Korea, October, 1951.

So beautiful is the writing to his memory that we quote the following:—

“ John was the younger son of the late Lieutenant General James Carson Breckinridge, U.S.M.C., and of Mrs. Breckinridge. Although he was born in Virginia, and loved the Shenandoah Valley, where his mother's people lived, he had a deep-rooted affection for Kentucky too. Not only did he visit his kinsmen in Lexington, but he came often to see us in the Frontier Nursing Service at Wendover, first as a schoolboy, and later whenever he was home on leave. He formed many friendships, both in the Service and in the neighbourhood. A superb rider, Johnny always asked to be given difficult horses, in order to train them for the use of those who rode less well.

“ The deep love of John's life was given to the Marine Corps, in which he had been raised, and any part of the world where he happened to be, suited him—if it held Marines. When he graduated, at 17, in 1943, from St. James School in Maryland, he received his mother's permission (his father having died) to enlist as a private in the Marines—and promptly did. He asked for service in the Pacific but was entered in the V-12 Programme instead. Then he went through officer's training at Quantico and, at 19, was appointed a Second Lieutenant in the Reserves—just as the second World War ended. While he was a company officer in the Seventh Marine Regiment in China (guarding ports and railroads) he accepted an appointment as a regular in the Marine Corps. He was in the Caribbean in March, 1950, when he was commissioned a First Lieutenant.

“ At the request of General John Taylor Selden, John was sent to Camp Lejeune as his aide-de-camp near the end of 1950. Deeply attached as John was to General Selden, whom he had known from childhood, he could not remain in a safe post while other Marines were fighting a war overseas. He enlisted General Selden's help in getting transferred to the First Marine Division in Korea. In May, 1951, just after his engagement to Miss Gertrude Alfriend of Charles Town, West Virginia, had been announced, his orders for Korea came through. The marriage was to take place upon his return.

“ Before reporting for duty in Korea in June, John had a short leave. He came to us at Wendover in late May to say good-bye. As he had done many times before, he got on a horse to ride through the neighbourhood to see his old friends. On Sunday evening, after dinner, we asked him to lead us in singing the Marine Corps Hymn.

“ John went into combat soon after reaching Korea. While on night patrol with 17 of his men, he was wounded by a hand grenade. He wrote: ‘ We toed the mark until we recovered our other wounded ’ . . . ‘ I am with the finest fighting men in the world.’ Of night patrol he wrote: ‘ I am honest when I say that I have patrolled ridge lines so steep that a step to left or right would be a stiff plunge almost straight down.’

“ John was back in the lines before the end of August.

“ It is natural, and therefore right, for the leaves to change and fall in the autumn of the year, but the hurricanes of our Twentieth Century wars are sweeping away the green leaves of spring.

“ In appraising the death of one so young, so courteous, so loving-hearted as John, we have to go back to his early years and recognise, even then translucent, the single goal at which he always aimed. During his childhood, while his father was in command of the Marines at Peking, he lived in China. One day when he was about five years old, and his brother Jim six and a half, their father came in from anxious

duty, in what was a disturbed country even then. He found the two little boys waiting for him in front of the fire, and wrote the following verses, as he sat watching them:

MAY YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

“ Will you sit before the fire, my bairns,
And gaze at the gleaming coals?
With eyes the size of your great surprise,
Which the wonder-wonder holds?

“ Will you sit here by the fire, my dears,
And dream through your lovely dreams?
Yes, gaze in the blaze that has no haze,
Where dreams are real as they seem.

“ So long as God lets the children dream
That sit by the loving fire,
The faith of youth will preserve the truth
Of the human heart's desire.

“ Did John's dreams come true? Who shall say? With all his ardent young heart he wanted to live—to marry the girl he loved; to see his mother again, his people, his friends; to keep in touch with his brother, with that loyalty to the Corps they held in common, through long years to come. But he died being what he wanted to be—a Marine—and doing what he felt it his duty to do.

“ If we accept the issues of our heritage, we cannot question the destiny of a soldier. His life is dedicated, and only faith can hold fast and triumph over personal grief. The high attainments of the spirit do not belong to us to apportion or deny.’ ”

SEMPER FIDELIS

In the death of First Lieutenant Breckinridge our hearts go out in deepest sympathy to his wonderful mother—Mrs. Mary Breckinridge, the Editor of the BULLETIN and Pioneer of the Frontier Nursing Service, to his bride-to-be, and his only brother.

In their sorrow, bereft of the shining spirit of their loved one, may they be comforted in that, surely the memory of this brave young soldier who dedicated all his life to his calling, will be an inspiration to all who knew him.

A Thought for the Month.

Rooms.

DEAR ME, ROOMS, HOW THEY VARY! The room at the end of the hall makes one wish to sing and dance as one enters. The room opening off the side passage is quite different. Yet it has been well treated, a wide deep fireplace, oriel window, corner cupboard, and yet something in that room is not just right. I wonder why? Can it be that it is soul-less?

The feel of a house is a very definite thing, some seem to enfold one with a kindly warmth of protection, while others are almost hostile. Can it be the force of personality of former residents living on and giving out love and peace and goodwill and so making one aware of the influence of these sweet graces; and likewise the shades of discontent with which some former resident may have been disturbed.

Let us then recognise the potency of thought and see to it that the invisible controls shall record and transmit only those rays of warmth and encouragement with which we like to be greeted, instead of being conscious of being thrown back into one's self because the room is soulless. The power of thought is as powerful as the spoken word. The giving out of love and peace can be marred by outbursts of temper, bad language even though the temper and bad language is only expressed in thought and not in speech.

Books are powerful holders of personality, for once grown up, no one keeps books for which they do not care. That is why happiness and peace is so often found in a library.

A. R. B.

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