

Northern Messenger

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Publishers' Note.

REQUESTS FOR MORE STORY GRANTED.

Many 'Messenger' readers have been urging more story matter in the 'Messenger,' but as that involved encroachment on various important departments it was not thought wise to give more space to stories in a twelve-page paper. It was impossible to increase the size of the paper at the present rate of subscriptions without deriving much more revenue from advertising sources.

We have, however, preferred to add to the space devoted to advertising and, by the increase of resource from that department, are able not only to continue the present price but, for the time being at least, to devote two more pages to stories.

Indeed, it was under contemplation to increase the subscription rate without increasing the size of the paper as the rate has really been too low in view of the increased price of paper.

God's Use of a Single Sermon

(Geo. C. Wilding, D.D., in 'Northwestern Christian Advocate.')

It occurred a good many years ago, I note, as I look backward. I was at that time a presiding-elder in a large West Virginia district. I was almost constantly on the go, studying the condition of my district and endeavoring to supply its needs.

In the little village of S— we did not have a church and it seemed to me that it was rather poorly supplied with the gospel. A new railway was being laid through this bit of a town and, although it had enjoyed a long Rip Van Winkle sleep, it manifested symptoms of really waking up. My presiding-elder instinct at once decided it must receive attention.

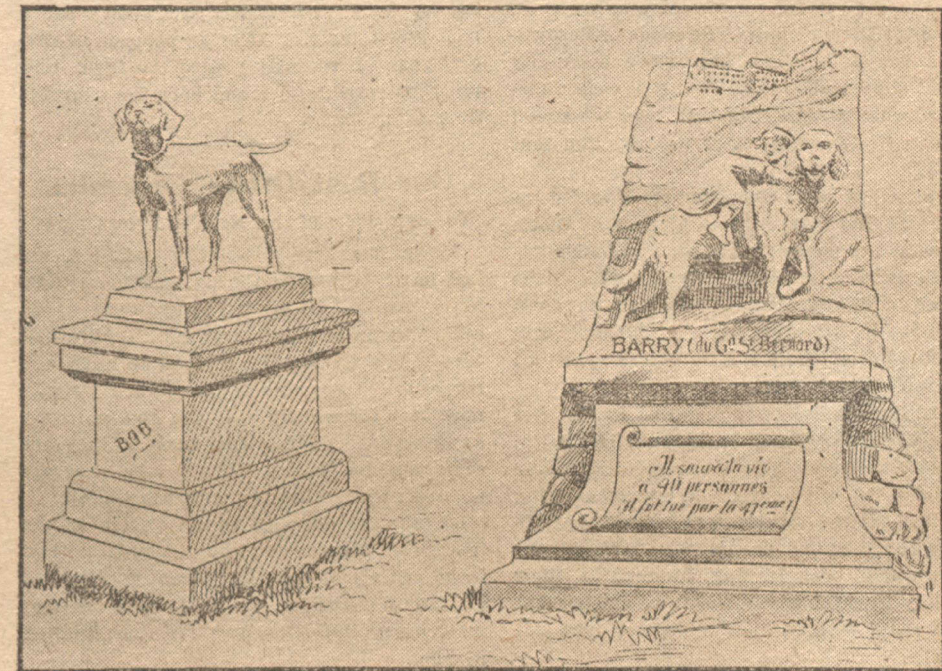
So, at the ensuing session of our annual conference, a small circuit was formed around this growing little town and a preacher appointed to it, with instructions to move into S— and live there.

Soon after this new pastor of the S— circuit was comfortably settled in his new home he began his work in downright earnest. He visited the people, was royally welcomed and soon was fairly well acquainted in the town and its environment.

A few weeks after the settlement of the pastor special revival meetings were begun in the one little shell of a church that the wee town afforded. It was a union meeting, another evangelical pastor uniting with our new pastor in the conduct of the services.

The people of the town and the surrounding region attended the meetings in large numbers, considering the population of the place. Brotherly feeling predominated and all was harmony and sweetness.

From the very beginning of the meeting there seemed to be a deep thoughtfulness among the people. The meetings were impressive, solemn and tender. The preachers faithfully presented the gospel message and, to all appearances, it was well received. But nobody was inclined to make a move toward the kingdom of God. At the close of



MONUMENTS IN THE PARIS CEMETERY FOR DOGS, ILE DES RAVAGEURS.

every fervent sermon the preachers would earnestly plead with the assembled people to give their hearts to God. But nobody could be induced to step out upon the Lord's side.

The meetings went on in this way for some two weeks. Vigorous preaching, deep feeling, a crowded church, but no seekers of salvation. Just at this juncture, on a beautiful Friday afternoon in the fall of the year, I was passing through the town on my way to attend a quarterly meeting on an adjoining circuit.

The two preachers and some of the chief laymen of the town met me at the station to tell me about the peculiar status of the meeting. After a somewhat hurried conversation they unitedly invited me to stop off and preach in the meeting that night.

As I could reach my quarterly meeting in time by taking an early train the next morning, I decided to hearken to the call and remain with them. I walked on up to the home of an old college chum, in the outskirts of the village, where I was to be entertained.

I had a pleasant visit with the family of my host up to the close of the evening meal. And yet, all through that cheerful, social atmosphere, I could distinctly feel the weight of the approaching meeting pressing heavily upon my heart.

I excused myself from the company as we arose to leave the table and, putting on my hat, walked slowly out into the orchard on the hilltop, overlooking the tiny town. When deeply wrought up about anything, how distinctly and sharply we note even the most minor incidents of the occasion. I can so readily recall that evening. It was the close of a full-orbed, glorious Indian-summer day. The sun was just setting behind those picturesque Ohio-River hills. The world was all a-tint with golden and crimson splendor.

As I walked back and forth in that quiet orchard and communed with God my soul

was illumined with a glory beyond the rare effulgence of that wonderful autumnal evening. A light flooded my heart that never shone on sea or land.

After my season of prayer I began to cast about in my mind as to what gospel theme I should present to that crowded congregation that soon would be assembled in that plain little house of worship.

As I left the home of my friend I had taken out of my well worn saddle-bags a half-dozen sermon sketches, some of which, I felt, would be suited to the service of the evening. As I walked to and fro under those old apple trees, my feet sinking noiselessly into the soft sward, I carefully studied my sermon outlines. And I did not neglect or forget to pray for divine guidance in my choice of a sermon.

I went over them slowly, one by one. I was unsettled in my mind. I went back over them more intently than before. Still I was not clear as to what I should select. A third canvass of my stock left me perfectly at sea. Slowly there crept over me the conviction that none of them was suitable for the occasion. This discovery caused the cold chills to gallop up my back. I had nothing else left. In an hour I must face that congregation. What should I do?

I flung myself upon my knees, at the gnarled roots of an ancient apple tree, and pleaded with God for illumination. I fairly begged for a message. It was dark for a brief moment. Then there came upon me the conviction that I should preach from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. At first I could not remember where it was to be found. I soon recalled that it was in Luke xvi., 19-31.

But still I hesitated, and said to myself: 'It is true that I have a sketch of a sermon on that parable, but I have not preached from it inside of a year. I cannot possibly recall it.'