

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Scars of Battle

All war veterans, officers or soldiers, who have been exposed to the rigors of war are scarred, some physically, all emotionally. In his book *Eisenhower: At War—1943-1945*, David Eisenhower reports that the general, his grandfather, would become irascible with anyone who tried to engage him in trivial conversation about the war. He knew far too well that there is nothing trivial about real war. He was painfully aware that many of his orders resulted in the death of not only thousands of enemy troops, but of his own as well. The price of victory, he knew, was very, very high.

True veterans, those who were in the heat of battle, are seldom loquacious. They deliberately avert conversations that would cause them to open chests sealed and buried in the recesses of their mind. They are scarred veterans.

There are scars of victory and scars of defeat.

We can't help but feel for the many youth who in their early teens were recruited by Hitler and given special training and privileges in hopes of turning them into super soldiers who would be the backbone of the III Reich. As the war progressed and the tide began turning against Germany, in desperation Hitler drew on these young men, often only 16 and 17 years old, sending them to the front lines, where it soon became evident that it takes more than fanaticism to avoid bullets, grenades and mines. Many were killed, others were maimed. It must have been a traumatic experience to lie on a hospital cot, minus both legs, or an arm, or totally blind, as news trickled in that the thousand year Reich was in its death throes, and finally hear hushed whispers that the führer himself was dead, that the war was over. Lost.

It must have been a sad day when these young men returned home—if home still existed—in a wheelchair, on crutches, or with a white cane, scarred and maimed for life. Parents and siblings remember the proud, smartly uniformed young man who confidently left home after his last furlough, confident he and his fellow youth

would make the difference, a far cry from the bitter, dejected young man who now sits slumped on the sofa, scarred by defeat.

One of the most poignant incidents of World War II involve German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, known as the “Desert Fox.” This dedicated, highly successful general, placed his professional responsibilities above all other comforts. He braved the heat of the African desert and the cold of the European mainland, as he brilliantly conducted his campaigns. A dedicated husband who almost daily wrote his wife a letter, Rommel sacrificed the comforts of home to better serve his nation.

Rommel was a true German, a loyal servant of the führer. Yet as the war progressed, it became increasingly evident that he was fighting for a madman, and not for his country. Not only was Rommel disenchanting with his despotic leader, but some of his officers as well. Knowing that the needless killing would draw out indefinitely, so long as the führer was alive, these officers began plotting his death. They carefully approached Rommel, soliciting his collaboration. The general refused to take an active part in the assassination plot, but indirectly gave his blessing on the project. Obviously, he didn't report to Hitler what was taking place.

The plot failed. An attache case loaded with explosives was taken into Hitler's bunker by a trusted officer and left at his place under the conference table. The timed charge went off, but Hitler's life was spared by the massive solid oak center leg that shielded him from the direct blast.

What followed was one of the most thorough and terrible investigations ever carried out. Anyone thought to have had any foreknowledge of the plot was ruthlessly tortured until the last bit of information was extracted, which included the fact that Field Marshal Rommel was privy to the plot. SS police were immediately dispatched to Rommel's home, where he was resting, and had him arrested. In “consideration” for his services rendered, Hitler generously gave him the option of secretly committing suicide, with a subsequent state funeral and all military honors, or of being brought to trial, and most certainly condemned, and his family disgraced.

Rommel chose a cyanide pill, a less than distinguished award for many years of faithful, sacrificial service. Truly, a high price to pay for playing on the losing team.

Victory scars are different. They may match the scars of defeat in severity, but instead of representing a lost cause, they are recognized as medals, as decorations. Contrary to Rommel's dismal end, death itself can become glorious, with victory comforting not only the one giving his life, but family and acquaintances as well, indeed, entire nations, as the memory of Nathan Hale, and his words on the scaffold, do to this day.

Until now we have been thinking in earthly terms, as citizens of this world think. However, as citizens of another kingdom, we direct our attention to spiritual scars.

Eisenhower knew that natural warfare was no trivial matter. All true Christians know the same thing about spiritual warfare. In fact, the greatest battles ever fought on human turf, pale when held up to the spiritual combat which is being carried on today, even as you read these words.

Spiritual battles never end in a draw, or even in a peace treaty. After the battlefield lies in silence, there has been victory and defeat. One side has won, the other has lost (with no greater defeat than to believe one has won, even while life is ebbing away).

We could speak of defeat, of the scars of defeat, of death, all the while illustrating with actual battlefield happenings, but that is not the reason for this article. We want to talk about victory. And yes, about the scars of victory. If you believe scars are repulsive or mutilative, please pay attention, as we discuss the scars—or “marks,” as the apostle Paul calls them—of victory:

“From henceforth let no man trouble me: *for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*”

He elaborates on his sufferings and scars:

“...in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

Yes, without a doubt Paul was a scarred man. Just the incident when he was dragged out of the city, stoned and left for dead, surely left some permanent “marks.”

In his many travels, Paul must have spent a great deal of time in the home of his brothers and sisters in the faith. We can't help but believe he was both a welcome and interesting guest. Children must have loved hearing his stories. In fact, we imagine several children sitting gathered around him after the evening meal and requesting, “Uncle Paul, please tell us another story.”

Paul smiles, clears his throat, and asks, “Which one?”

One of the children shyly touches the side of Paul's head and says, “Uncle Paul, tell us how you got these scars.”

“I think I've told you that story several times, haven't I?”

“You have, but we would like to hear it again,” the children agree in unison.

“Barnabas and I were preaching the gospel in Iconium. The people flocked in to hear us. Quite a few Jews and Greeks got converted. But that is when the trouble began. As so often happens when the gospel is preached, some don't like it and decide to mess things up. In this case it was some of the Jews—not the ones who got converted—who started agitating the Gentiles. The whole town got involved. Some were for us and others against us.

“We kept on preaching, but we could tell things were really getting tense. We found out that plans were being made to stone us, so we left Iconium and went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe, where we immediately began preaching again.

“In Lystra we ran across a man who had never walked in his life; he was born a cripple. I looked at that man and something told me he had faith. So I told him, “Stand up on your feet!” And he did. He stood up all by himself and walked for the first time in his life...”

“Uncle Paul, and how did the man act after you healed him?”

“He didn’t know how to act. He had never expected something like this to happen, so he acted sort of like you children do when you’re out playing. He would walk a little, then he would back up, and then he’d give a little jump, joyously laughing all the time.

“Well, a lot of people saw what happened, and in a matter of minutes it seemed the whole town knew what had happened. And this is where the strangest thing took place. Some of the people decided Barnabas and I were gods and started to kneel down right there on the street and worship us. They even gave us names of planets that they worshiped. They called Barnabas Jupiter and me Mercurius.

“That was the last thing we wanted. Here we were telling them about God and how that He sent His Son to die for their sins, and they were determined to turn us into gods who couldn’t do a solitary thing for them.

“They didn’t believe us when we told them we weren’t gods. They were getting ready to sacrifice to us, when some men from Lystra and Derbe showed up, some of the same ones who had wanted to stone us in Iconium, and were they mad! They started hollering around that we were no good, that they shouldn’t listen to us because what we said was poison.

“So we had three kinds of people there: some sincere people who really were interested in the gospel, the fanatics who believed we were gods, and those who believed we were no good. There were some mighty shrewd men in this last group and soon they had convinced a few in the crowd that we—or at least I—ought to be killed. It happened there were a lot of small and medium sized rocks where we were, and the first thing I knew a rock hit me in the knee. I lost my balance and fell to the street. When that happened, the rocks came flying thick...”

“Uncle, did those rocks hurt when they hit you?” asked one of the children, even though he had asked this same question each time the story was told previously.

“They did. To tell you the truth, I thought it was the end...”

Reaching up to Paul’s head and feeling the scars, the same child asked (as he had before), “Did it hurt really bad when you got hit over here?”

Paul smiled ever so briefly. “No, those didn’t hurt, you see they hit so hard that I lost consciousness. They were sharp rocks and blood gushed out. The people thought I was dead. Several strong fellows grabbed me by the arms and began dragging me to the city gate.

“As they were dragging me, I began to regain consciousness, but I realized the best thing I could do was play dead, so that is what I did.

“Barnabas and some of the other Christians watched their chance, and as soon as the fellows who dragged me out were gone, they came to where I was, wanting to bury me. At first I didn’t know who it was, so I still played dead. But then I recognized their voices and heard them crying, so I tried to sit up.”

“And then what, uncle?”

“I wish you could have seen their faces when they realized I wasn’t dead. Quickly they helped me up, bound up my wounds, and Barnabas and I set out for Derbe, where we continued preaching the Word.”

“Uncle Paul, sometimes you limp. Is it because of that rock that hit you in the knee?”

“Yes, sometimes it really bothers me.”

“Uncle, when your knee hurts, do you hate those people who tried to stone you?”

“No. Never!” Now Paul smiled gently. “Do you know what, when my knee hurts and when I see the scars on my body, I feel happy...”

“Why, Uncle Paul?”

“I got those scars because I love Jesus, and that makes me feel good. Then I remember how He suffered for me.”

“Do you have lots of other scars?”

“I have some scars I have never shown you.” Loosening his robe, he asked the children to reach down and feel his back.

“Oh, horrors! Uncle! What happened?” the first child asked.

The second child reached down. “Oh, how terrible! Your back feels like a... like a... I know, like the coarse rock that my mom uses to grind food. What happened?”

“Five times I was beaten with 39 stripes and three times I was beaten with rods. I suppose you could say my back is one big scar...”

“And does it hurt badly when someone is beaten like that, uncle?”

“It hurts unbelievably. Each time it hurts worse because one’s back is so bruised up.”

“And that makes you happy too?”

“It does. I remember how they did the same thing to Jesus. Now eight times I have had the chance of suffering just a little bit of what He suffered.”

“So your scars don’t hurt you, do they?”

“No, they...” here Paul suddenly became quiet and a pained expression came over his face. The children thought they saw a tiny tear in the corner of each of his eyes. Quietly they waited.

“No, these scars don’t hurt me. I rejoice in them... But I have some scars that hurt badly. Very, very badly.”

“Uncle, are these scars worse than the scars on your back? Where are they?”

Once again Paul was silent, staring into space. “They’re in my heart.”

“In your hearrrrrt? What do you mean?”

“You asked me if I hated those men who stoned me, and I said I didn’t, right? But do you know that before I met the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, I was a ‘Christian hunter’...”

“A what?”

“A Christian hunter. When I would hear that there were Christians in a certain town or community, I would go to the authorities and they would give me a letter saying I could hunt them down and either put them in prison or kill them...”

Now Paul’s voice broke. Between sobs that shook his shoulders he continued, “And I did it many, many times. Sometimes I would arrest whole families and turn them over to the authorities, knowing full well that they would all be killed. When Stephen was stoned to death, I was there. In fact, the executioners handed me his outer clothing, which I held while they did their grisly work. Those scars are in my heart and they hurt terribly.”

“And so what do you do when they hurt so badly?”

“Then I remember how Jesus met me on the road to Damascus and forgave all my sins, even the terrible sin of killing a Christian. Today I have a free conscience, but the scars are still painful. And so, even though I should be stoned or flogged a thousand times, it would be little. I would rejoice in each new scar.”

What you have just read is fruit plucked off of the tree of imagination. Yet we believe that the roots of this tree are grounded in the soil of reality. Which brings us to something very real.

Scars. Or marks.

Today, in the early hours of the 21st century, we have practically ceased to see bodily persecution or torture as even a remote possibility. And so, if there was one in our midst, a brother, whose body was covered with scars or marks, suffered for the sake of conscience, he would be a celebrity, with a long list of congregations inviting him to come and tell his experience. It would be impressive, to say the very least.

God loves marks—the good kind. Modern man dreams of marching up to the heavenly tribunal with a chestful of medals, medals of good works, of worthy positions held on earth, of good stewardship...

Good reader, that eternal Judge isn't going to be looking for that kind of medals. He'll be looking for scars. For marks.

So where does that leave us, in a time in which persecution has become tabu? Please read on, for this is what this article is all about.

I personally know some very scarred up brothers and sisters. In fact, I know many. Rather than mentioning names, we will talk about how people became scarred. Open your mind and be amazed at how many you also know (possibly many whom I don't know) who bear many scars.

It is never easy to be slandered. To have done or said something in the best of intentions, and then have someone misconstrue one's words and actions and spread the news. There rises up within us a desire to set the record straight, to shout, “It's a lie!” There is that urge to look up the perpetrator and broadside him for his lack of charity and basic spirituality. It hurts. Desperately. But after a session with the Lord, maybe a number of them, a quietness steals over the soul, a desire to forgive as one has been forgiven. The wound may have been deep, but the scar left is so sweet.

A business deal is talked over and an agreement is reached. The basic conditions are set forth. Both parties shake hands, possibly a document is signed. But when it comes time for final settlement, a problem arises. One party simply refuses to make good his end of the agreement, which may result in a substantial financial loss for the other. Once again the first urge is to retaliate, to try and force a just settlement. But grace is found to say, “If that's the way you want it, that's the way it will be.” It hurts to be taken for a ride, to be thrown into a financial bind because of another man's dishonesty. But with full release, this wound heals into such a joyous mark.

Especially young people know what it is like to be ridiculed for taking a stand on an unpopular issue and suddenly find themselves having an elbow relationship with other

youth. For a young person, few instruments can create a more hurtful wound than an elbow. But as that youth seeks his refuge in the Lord, the Great Physician pours oil and wine into the wound, and the resulting scar fills the heart with happiness.

Scars of victory.

In a recent article we wrote that men and women are seeking perfection in plastic surgeons. We now take this thought one step further. People today, including—unfortunately—too many of our own brothers and sisters, are trying to live a *scarless* life. By exercising self-control, they have a fairly exemplary life, a life that apparently has few defeats, and consequently, few scars of defeat. But such a life is more mechanical than spiritual, there are also few true victories. And thus, few scars of victory.

The result is a Christian who practices mechanical, but not spiritual, self-denial. It's a Christian who is outwardly suave, but inwardly undisciplined.

The belief that one can be a successful soldier and remain unscathed is extremely dangerous. All true soldiers bear scars. They bear in their spirit the marks of Christ. Like the natural soldier who often locks his scars in a chest and hides the key, the spiritual soldier also locks some of his scars in a chest, not because they are too terrible to remember, but because they are too precious, too sacred. To tell of these scars could easily cast a shadow on the brother or sister who inflicted the wounds, so the scars are locked away. But not the joy.

When these scarred up Christians come before the Lord on the final day, no questions will be necessary. We see the Judge, the Lord Jesus, lightly running His fingers over the many scars of the one standing before Him, and then saying, "I know you." ▲

[Inspired by a sermon recently preached at the Monte Alegre Congregation by Min. Elias Stoltzfus.]

The story of a song

by Frances Holdeman

Thank You, God

[In a recent Christian Endeavor program, Frances Holdeman was asked to tell a special experience related to a song. I hope you readers enjoy it as much as we did. Frances is married to Duane Holdeman and is the daughter of the late Jake G. Loewen.]

The way I understand, I am to tell of some special experience I have had in my life related to a song; also the impression it left on me. After I finish, I will ask my family to come up front and help me sing the song.

I will tell you of two that are very precious to me. I think it was six years ago, maybe more, that I was in bed and it was almost time to get up. It was still dark outside and it seemed I was half awake, when suddenly I saw a big group of angels all facing one direction in the sky. I was off to one side watching them, when all of a sudden they all burst forth with such a beautiful harmony, singing a short song (I guess you might

Thank You, God

Angelic Chorus

Angelic Chorus
as sung to Franz Haldeman

Thank you, God, for help-ing me, Thank you God, for help-ing me.

And I know that Thou art al-ways kind and good: and lov-ing me.

So I'll place my hand in Thine, Till this fleet-ing life is o'er,

Then I'll go home to dwell on that e-ter-nal shore.

call it a chorus). It just felt to me as they sang that it was the language of my heart, as though it was me singing it in praise to God, but instead I was holding still in reverence and awe, as they sang instead.

Then I was suddenly completely awake and I looked to see if Duane was awake so that I could tell him, but he was sound asleep, so I decided to not wake him. Instead I got up, went to the kitchen to write down the words as I had remembered them. I was surprised I could write the notes the way they had sung them, because I'm not one to hear a song and then put the notes down just from hearing it, like most of my family can. I did not know all the notes of the harmony part, though, so my son Daniel and his family figured out the harmony notes this week and sang it to me till I could tell them it sounded so much like I remembered when the angels sang.

I do feel so thankful to God for all His goodness.

Then there's the song, *Look to the Lamb of God*. This song has been special to me since I was 18 or 19 years old. We lived in Oregon at that time. There were hardly any other church members beside our family living there, so my two brothers, three sisters and I were the only youth there. So since we only had morning church meeting on Sunday, because there was no minister living there, we were lonely and blue some times. This was before the Roseburg unit started, which was not so very far away from where we lived.

This particular Sunday I must have felt weary, blue and sleepy, so I lay down on our bed in the afternoon and went to sleep. We four girls shared the same room and it was next to the livingroom, with a door we could open between the two rooms. It was open slightly at this particular time, so I could hear the family visiting, singing or whatever. I did have a good rest and slept soundly. Just as I woke up, I heard the song *Look to the Lamb of God* and it sounded so beautiful to me, just like angels singing. Then I quickly realized it was my family singing, so I listened to all the words and such a good message in that song. I know I lay there and cried as they sang it. It has been special to me ever since. It's just like one verse says, "His love will cheer and fill your heart with song, / If we keep our eyes on Jesus." ▲

Wildlife

by Dean Mininger

Of Snakes and Old-Timers

If you find snake stories boring, then you may go on to the next article. If old-timers don't interest you, then you may again go on to the next article. No offense will be taken.

I find snake stories interesting, and old-timers here in Brazil more interesting yet. This account is about both. Although some perhaps have the idea that Brazil is crawling with snakes, some of those being mighty big ones, and some being mighty poisonous,

we have not found it so. For the first years after we moved here, we did encounter more than we do now. Sometimes months go by in which we do not even see a harmless snake, let alone a big or poisonous one. But we won't avoid reality. There are some snakes abiding here, some big, some poisonous.

What is there about snake stories that have a way of going from big to bigger? For example, one time years ago when I was visiting the US, different ones asked me about the 77 foot long snake that had supposedly been encountered in our area. Now that would be some encounter! That is no small snake. In fact, that is a snake story, that if true, merits headlines the world around! And yet, you may be assured that this story is one of those that went from big to bigger. I think that perhaps this 77 foot story came about from a true happening that I witnessed with my own eyes. So I would enjoy telling it if you care to listen.

Getting back to the true facts, the one I saw at my feet measured 17 feet long. Did 17 become 77 by way of letter? Anyway, that is already enough snake to cause this chap to perk up. But it wasn't only the reptile that drew my interest. It also had to do with an old-timer.

We don't shed any tears because there aren't as many snakes around as before. But I sure hate to see our old-timers leave us one by one. It seems to me that we are losing something that will never be replaced. The older generation grew up in a different time than I did, and it seems like especially here in Brazil, they are simply a unique group of people. They have an interesting, and sometimes very humorous way of expressing themselves and relating experiences. They use terms that the younger, educated generation doesn't use. And yet they aren't trying to be smart or funny. It is just their way. They think differently and don't always understand the modern inventions.

So when one of these old-timers pulls onto your yard dragging a snake behind his jeep, a person like me has a strong tendency to drop quick whatever he's doing and make a thorough investigation of the latest events. This happened just a short time after we had moved down here. We hardly knew our Brazilian neighbors. His name was Sylvestre Caetano and his farm bordered ours. But he was already thinking of us.

In that era, we hardly ever saw vehicles go by our place. I happened to see this one coming down the road and pulling into our drive. The shed in which we lived was a hundred yards from the road. I first thought it was a pole that was coming along smartly behind the jeep. It wasn't. It was a snake, and though dead, still good for something. It seemed like our good neighbor was totally sincere when he made his kind offer. For a certain sum, the snake would belong to us. Then, what a nifty suggestion followed. We could generously call all the Americans together on the Colony for a feast. We could serve anaconda meat, for which there would surely be sufficient. After all, 17 feet of anaconda muscle would satisfy a sizeable amount of healthy appetites! Did it even occur to him that our appetites cease to exist when the menu is one of the most repulsive creatures known?

I have wondered since then if it was all a joke, because as far as I know, it would be the rare Brazilian that would go for snake meat. I hope that we didn't offend him when we declined his gracious offer. He also informed us that the biggest one got away. And it was in a woods not so distant from our shed. I guess we could have thanked him for

his nightmare provoking information.

The snake is long gone. We preferred to let the ants have it. No loss. Sylvestre is gone. That is a great loss. This man thought differently than we do. He lived in a house that we would consider adequate for animals. He didn't read, write, or even drive. He had a driver take him where he wanted to go.

Like was said before, he didn't understand all the modern inventions. For example, one day he showed up at a brother's shop. He asked that the brother would weld a length of board in the floor of his jeep. There was a troublesome hole that had come about from rust. It needed to be covered. Sylvestre didn't understand that wood doesn't weld. No doubt in his mind, wood is softer than metal, so why couldn't it be fused together? I still wonder how the brother got out of that one!

Sylvestre didn't manage to keep up with modern life. But I think he was happier than many that are partaking of all that money can buy. He could easily have built a mansion for himself. He owned much land and cattle. But he was content to live in a wooden structure that had no screens or glass in the windows. There was no ceiling to keep out the dust or the light sprinkle that would come through the tile roof during a heavy rain. There were no electrical appliances or lighting. At this house you could lean out the window and contemplate the cows, horses, dogs, chickens and pigs in his front yard. What a fly factory! There was no lawn, shrubs, or fancy landscaping. It would be more than a major adjustment for us to learn to live like he did. And yet, what an interesting man to be around. And what an enrichment to my life to have known him.

We have one of these old-timers as our close neighbor. He is the father of one of the deacons in the Church of God. He and his wife are good people and I enjoy visiting with him. But he is not converted. This has been a burden to me many times. How can we be a help to them? Pray for them, and also for us, that God can use us in some little way to direct them to the truth.

So, if you come to visit us and ask to see a snake, we likely will have to disappoint you for lack of being able to encounter one. We might just have to take you to the Goiânia zoo. But if you come soon, we can in a matter of minutes take you to visit an old-timer. But they are disappearing fast!. Don't tarry!

A Story

Author Anonymous

The Sermon in the Wilderness

“My friend, I have explained that I must have the horse, and that I will deposit with thee his full value until his safe return within a week's time.”

The tall man spoke a trifle wearily, as though he had had almost enough of the argument. It was a hot day on the edge of the great Pennsylvania forest. The dust in front of the Rockville tavern still hung in a cloud where the coach, on its weekly arrival

from the distant city, had stirred it a-fresh. The group of farmers, waiting for mail and news of the outside world, had watched with curious eyes this stranger descend from the high seat beside the driver. They had noted the broad-brimmed hat, white stock, carpet bag and closely fitting “store” clothes that marked him as city-bred, and the foreign way he used his hands when he talked. Their natural distrust had melted, however, before the radiant smile of more than ordinary good-will that lighted up the blue eyes and wrinkled the lean face as he strode briskly toward them crying, “The peace of God be with you, my friends! From which of you may I obtain a horse for a journey into the wilderness?”

Several minutes of parley followed between the innkeeper and the stranger, not a word being lost by the eager group of listeners. This man insisted that he must travel for three days straight into the heart of the forest “along a way that would be opened” to him. The innkeeper objected that there was only one trail a horse could travel, and this exceedingly dangerous, with treacherous fords and rocky pitfalls. Did the stranger know that the three-days’ trail led only to a lumber camp, and that honest men who valued their lives or their purses did well to avoid this place? Adventurous explorers had been known to enter the dark forest, never to return. Was the gentleman’s business so imperative that he would risk his life?

“It is my Father’s business, and the most imperative in the world,” answered the stranger calmly. “Should a hundred men beset my path, I should go unharmed. I have received instructions from Above and go without fear, for the Spirit upholds me. So, if I may hire a horse of thee—”

At length a wiry little mare was brought out and a dozen hands helped saddle her. The stranger, though urged to remain over night, refused courteously, explaining that he carried food and was accustomed to sleep in the open. As he paid for the mare and was about to ride away, the innkeeper inquired, “What is your name, stranger?”

“Stephen Grellet, of New York, and I go to carry the message of God to those who will listen.”

As the little mare and the man climbed the rough path and disappeared into the birches that edged the dark pines, one man remarked, “A Quaker, I know by his speech, and a godly man. But he cannot melt the hearts of those men with his soft tongue.”

Stephen Grellet found a single trail winding now along the slippery banks of a rushing stream, now over treacherous moss-covered rocks, skirting steep cliffs, and twice plunging through the river where the mare was forced to swim. During the first afternoon he passed several clearings with little cabins, where children ran out to wave and call to him; but after this he saw no work of human hands except the logs left by receding spring floods along the banks. Though no sounds except those of the forest came to his ears, he moved with a radiance in his eyes and with a smile upon his lips, as though he were listening to the cheery words of a dear companion.

Early in the afternoon of the third day—a breathless day, when even the birds were voiceless and the low, pulsing drone of insects made the silence seem only more profound—Stephen Grellet found the trail widened into a corduroy road where

horses had evidently been used to drag the logs down to the river bank. He noticed a pile of rusty cans and a piece of chain hanging on a branch. Then rounding a huge rock, Stephen suddenly found himself on the edge of a space from which all trees and underbrush had been cleared. Facing him on the far side stood a large three-sided log shed; to the left and right of this shed were several rough, closed cabins, the bark from their slab sides hanging in tatters. A pile of black embers in the center of the space added a last touch of desolation.

Stephen Grellet reined in his mare in great perplexity. The message that had come to him had been very clear, and as was the habit of his life, he had followed the leading of the Spirit in perfect faith. He knew that he was to come to this spot in the heart of the wilderness where a gang of wood-cutters, far-famed for their lawlessness, had been operating, and here he was to preach the simple and holy truth of God's presence in the forest. It had not once occurred to him that, as evidently was the case, the lumbermen might have moved on deeper into the forest. He knew without question, however, that this was the place where he must preach. Alighting, he tied his mare to a sapling, leaving her to browse the long wood grass, and made his way to the central cabin where rough tables stood on a slightly raised floor. Mounting this platform, he faced the forest, a strange inner light making his face glow. During his long life he had traveled to the far corners of the earth, defying dangers and discomforts in order to carry the simple assurance of God's love to all people; yet never had he felt more completely the Divine Presence flooding through and around his whole being than when now he stood alone in the deserted camp, surrounded by the mystery of the forest. The afternoon sun, slanting between the brown tree pillars, fell upon a gold-green mass of ferns at his feet, and the fronds quivered, stirred by some tiny wood beast scampering through the stems.

"Oh, God—thou art here—here!" he cried, stretching wide his arms. As if in answer, a low murmur breathed in the tree-tops, swelling nearer, moving the pine needles softly. Then a loud rustle, perhaps of a startled animal behind the cabin, gave Stephen Grellet the sense that all around him were the invisible eyes and ears of the forest folk. To them and to God he spoke aloud, his words, blending the faith and joy of his own soul with the dignity of the pines, the grace of the fern fronds, the vitality of the little scurrying beasts, and over all the softly moving Presence in the wind-stirred branches.

At last, silent, with head bowed, he heard far off the leisurely, bell-like notes of the thrush thrilling through the forest spaces. With infinite peace in his heart he mounted the little mare and rode away, back to Rockville and the world.

Six years later Stephen Grellet was in London. He had gone there, as he had gone into the forests of Pennsylvania, guided only by the Spirit. He had gone down into the narrow, filthy streets, where men and women seemed too sodden to understand when he told them of the love of the Father, and he had preached in dark prisons where men looked at him dully when he spoke of the Divine Light. Yet whenever he ceased speaking there were always some who crowded nearer, seeking to know more of this Being who had sent him to show them the way out of their wretchedness.

Late one afternoon, smothered by the stagnant air of the slums, he walked on

London Bridge as the setting sun was throwing a broken red path on the oily water of the Thames. He was very tired, for he threw all his strength into the struggle to show to others the Light that burned in his own soul. As he stood looking at the spires of the vast city against the glow of the evening sky, he prayed for faith and peace. Suddenly the roar of London died in his ears and he heard again the gentle sighing of the pines in the Pennsylvania forest and the clear notes of the thrush. Just as truly God was with him here— The reverie of Stephen Grellet was shattered by someone seizing him roughly by the elbow. He turned quickly to face a broad, muscular man, with rugged face and eyes of piercing eagerness, who cried, in great excitement, as he peered into Stephen Grellet's face, "I have got you at last! I have got you at last!"

Stephen returned the gaze calmly, but could see nothing familiar about the man except that he was certainly an American.

"Friend," he replied, "I think thou art mistaken."

"But I am not—I cannot be! I have carried every line of your face in my memory for six years. How I have longed to see it again!"

"Who, then, art thou, and where dost thou think we have met?" inquired Stephen.

"Did you not preach in the great forest of Pennsylvania, three days' trip from the village of Rockville, six years ago last midsummer?"

"I did, but I saw no one there to listen."

The man held out his hands to Stephen Grellet—strong hands that had known hard toil. "I was there," he replied, his voice full of awe as the memory rose again before him. "I was the head of the woodmen who had deserted those shanties. We had moved on into the forest and were putting up more cabins to live in, when I discovered that I had left my lever at the old settlement. So, leaving my men at work, I went back alone for my tool. As I approached the old place I heard a voice. Trembling and agitated, I drew near, and saw you through the chinks in the timber walls of our dining shanty. I listened to you, and something in your face or in your words, or both, stirred me as I had never been stirred before. I went back to my men. I was miserable for weeks; I had no Bible, no book of any kind, no one to speak to about divine things.

"At last I found the strength I needed. I obtained a Bible; I told my men the blessed news that God was near us, and we learned together to ask forgiveness and to lead better lives. Three of us became missionaries and went forth to tell thousands of others of the joy and faith you brought into the forest." ▲

This & That

On January 1 the 6th Annual Meeting of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite in Brazil was held at the Monte Alegre Congregation. Following the normal routine, the afternoon session was dedicated to financial and activities reports, election of officers and different business items. Supper was served and the topic of the evening session was The Challenge of Caring for the Church in Our Day. There were two

talks: “The Individual’s Love and Care for the Church” and “The Present-day Issues We Face.” Except for the Acaraú Mission, all the missions and congregations were represented.

The Rio Verdinho Congregation had revival meetings the beginning of this month with Darrell Becker and Richard Mininger as the evangelists.

Monte Alegre began its meetings on Jan 25. Only Min. Keith Nightingale was present in the first two meetings. Min Franklin Wenger delayed his coming several days because of his mother’s surgery.

Predicting the economic future of a country is a bit like predicting the weather.

Only a... That doesn’t keep us from throwing out a few facts. Inflation for the year 2000 has been calculated at 6.99% (It used to be that much a week).

Unemployment is dropping, interest rates are dropping, and business is definitely on an upward trend. Few places is this more visible than in Rio Verde. Five high-rise condominiums (14 stories or more) are peeking up from behind plywood walls. City traffic at times resembles that of larger cities. Perdigão and Gessy Lever (that recently opened a large tomato processing plant) are contributing to the local economy, not only by the jobs they have created, but through the many businesses they have drawn to Rio Verde. Of one thing we can be sure: No matter how well things seem to be going, should there be a world crisis, we will be hit as hard as anyone.

Chester & Donalda Goossen and three children spent a week on the Amazon before coming to visit the Colony. They took a van to Curitiba to visit the mission, and then on to São Paulo to catch their return flight.

Julie Hibner from the Boa Esperança Cong. is helping out on the Acaraú mission while her sister, Mrs. John Kramer, teaches her children.

Gene & Mary Beth Koepl from Oregon snuck in real quiet like one day and about scarred the willies out of her parents, Bert & Ada Coblenz, with their surprise visit. (The amazing thing in this whole story is that Gene could actually do something quietly.)

On Jan. 11 the BN tour group arrived. Except for Ervy Koehn, the rest were from Canada: Levi & LuEtta Toews; Julian & Donella Toews; Wilmer & Carol Dueck; Joe & Adeline Penner; Ken & Johanna Giesbrecht and sons Stanton and David; Joetta and Martha Wohlgemuth; John & Velma Friesen. Most of the group, together with Daniel & Linda Holdeman and dau. Quinda; and Faith Becker, chartered a bus that took them to the Curitiba Mission and to Iguazu Falls. More on that next month.

At our Annual Meeting we used our new Hinário Cristão—Christian Hymnal — for the first time. Because of the difficulty in securing permission to use some copyrighted songs, it was decided to publish an abbreviated first edition and then work toward a permanent edition.