

**MEMOIR OF HORATIO
WOOD: FOR TWENTY-
FOUR YEARS MINISTER-
AT-LARGE IN LOWELL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649239863

Memoir of Horatio Wood: For Twenty-four Years Minister-at-large in Lowell by Jr. Horatio Wood

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Cover @ 2017

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JR. HORATIO WOOD

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Horatio Wood

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MEMOIR
OF
HORATIO WOOD

FOR

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS MINISTER-AT-LARGE IN LOWELL

BY HIS SON

Horatio Wood.

PRINTED BY
THE MORNING MAIL CORPORATION
LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS
1891

THIS brief account of my father's life was read before the Old Residents' Historical Association of Lowell, at a meeting held August 4, 1891, and has been printed in its annual pamphlet of Contributions.

The likeness facing the title page was copied by the Helotype Printing Company of Boston from a photograph taken in 1882.

HORATIO WOOD.

LOWELL, SEPTEMBER 19, 1891.

MEMOIR.

HORATIO WOOD, son of John and Elizabeth (Smith) Wood, was born at Newburyport, Mass., Dec. 1, 1807. The father was for fifty years a prominent merchant of Newburyport, and, for several years, president of the Mechanics Bank in that city. The son was fitted for college, partly at the Newburyport Academy, but chiefly by Mr. Caleb Cushing, who was then entering upon the practice of the law and was employed by several gentlemen to give their sons a better preparation for college than could be got at the schools of the town. In the spring of 1823, I think, the boys and their tutor spent a day or two in making a little excursion to see the busy beginning of what was afterward the city of Lowell. In 1823 Mr. Wood entered the freshman class at Harvard College, graduating in 1827. Beside the excellence of the usual instruction, the college then enjoyed certain new stimulating influences. Professor Ticknor, fresh from the German universities, gave lectures on French and Spanish literature. Dr. Charles Follen, an enthusiastic teacher, gave instruction in the German language, introduced gymnastics among the students and taught them how to run long distances "with a minimum of fatigue." Mr. Wood's copious and carefully written notes of Professor Ticknor's lectures are still preserved; he was captivated by Dr. Follen, studied German, practised the gymnastic exercises vigorously and kept up through life the habit of exercising in the open air. The mode

of running he frequently used, I am sure, until after he was seventy years of age. After graduation he taught school for a year at Concord, Mass., and for another year at Newburyport. He thoroughly enjoyed the year at Concord — his school and the social advantages of the place. Among his pupils were two who afterward removed to this city: Mr. Frederic Parker, deceased, who was for a year secretary of the Board of Directors of the Ministry-at-Large while Mr. Wood was minister; and Mr. James S. Russell, whose suggestive teaching of mathematics Mr. Wood's son enjoyed in his turn.

In 1829 Mr. Wood entered the Divinity School of Harvard College. Among his classmates were Rev. A. P. Peabody, his life-long friend; Rev. Charles Babbidge of Pepperell, and Rev. Henry A. Miles, formerly of this city. His real life from 1830 to 1844 is best learned from the following account, written by him, which I found among his papers after his death. It is written in so confidential a spirit, it is so complete a revelation of his early aspirations, that I can only imagine it to have been the beginning of an article intended to be read to his brother ministers-at-large at some meeting of their association.

My mind was taken by the first movements of Rev. Dr. Tuckerman among the poorest, the most friendless, the most neglected, the most exposed to sin and ruin of our fellow-men. It struck me like the dawning of a new day for the Unitarian Church if it would be not only doctrinally, but practically, truly Christian. Rev. F. T. Gray, Rev. C. F. Barnard, Rev. J. T. Sargent, Rev. R. C. Waterston,* I saw step forward, one after another, and put their hands zealously and vigorously to the plough of Christ in the new field, and my heart went with them. On a Saturday of my

* Those named were all ministers-at-large in Boston. Dr. Tuckerman began his labor in December, 1826; Mr. Barnard in April, 1832; Mr. Gray in October, 1833; Mr. Sargent in June, 1837, and Mr. Waterston in 1840.

last collegiate year, in 1827,* I went alone and spent a day in visiting the crowded rooms, cellars and attics of Broad Street [Boston], where there was a stifed mass of degradation and woe. I let nothing escape my eyes, heard all tales, sat down and talked familiarly with many till they unburdened themselves and turned themselves inside out, letting me know all that was in their hearts. I carried away knowledge and lessons which were never to leave me.

When in the Theological School, I started a philanthropic society of inquiries into missions and other plans of benevolent operation, and sought out and invited Dr. Tuckerman to go to Cambridge and address the students on his new experience, which he did with such interest, feeling and effect that I was as clay in the hands of the potter. Soon after I took another excursion alone to the underworld and visited the spirits in prison; went to the State Prison, felt interested in the Sunday School effort in behalf of the prisoners, offered my services as a teacher and asked leave of the chaplain to introduce to the charge of the vacant classes as many of brother students as might feel impelled to come; a proposition which was readily accepted. The next day, Sunday, I entered upon the work with William G. Elliot, now of St. Louis; Nathanael Hall, now of Dorchester; [Frederic W.] Holland and others; which was the beginning of a train of divinity students from Harvard, as teachers in the prison, kept up for years. On this same Saturday I also visited Lechmere Point jail, which I found without any chaplain and never visited by any brother or sister of mercy. I talked with every prisoner, male and female, felt my bowels yearn toward them and offered to the jailor my own services and that of others, undoubtedly to be procured, in Sabbath instruction to the inmates. I was referred to Sheriff Varnum of Lowell for permission, visited Lowell with Mr. Hall and readily obtained admission at any time for the purpose in view. The jail was then divided into large square cells with from one to ten drunkards, prostitutes, thieves and desperate persons in each. The plan adopted was for one student to be locked into a cell, the keeper retiring to his house, for one hour of talk and instruction with the inmates.† Generally five or six students thus employed themselves on Sabbath mornings. With some of us storms or severe cold had little power to deter from the service here or at

* He was then nineteen years old.

†At one time Mr. Wood was shut up in a cell with a single occupant who soon showed signs of insanity, and, drawing a knife, threatened to kill him. He appeared not to regard the threat and contrived, unseen by the prisoner, to throw his handkerchief out of the window. This attracted the attention of the keeper who instantly released him.