

**MEMOIR OF REV.
DAVID SANFORD**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649409983

Memoir of Rev. David Sanford by William M. Cornell

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Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM M. CORNELL

**MEMOIR OF REV.
DAVID SANFORD**

Memoir

OF

REV. DAVID SANFORD,

PASTOR OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH IN MEDWAY, MASS.

BY

REV. WILLIAM M. CORNELL, D. D.,

WITH THE

ADDRESS OF REV. MR. HARLOW AT THE FUNERAL.

ALSO,

THE ADDRESS OF REV. JACOB IDE, D. D., AT THE CONSECRATION OF
THE MONUMENT TO DAVID SANFORD, SEN.

MIDDLEBORO, MASS.:

HARLOW & THATCHER, PRINTERS.

1878.

MEMOIR.

REV. DAVID SANFORD was the son of Philo and Lydia (Whiting) Sanford. His mother was the great-granddaughter of Rev. Dr. Samuel Mann, of Wrentham. His father was son of Rev. David Sanford, who was a settled minister in West Medway thirty-seven years. From his church came the church of which the grandson—the subject of this memorial, bearing the same name—was pastor the same number of years.

The following is from Rev. David Sanford's autobiography:—

MEDWAY, March 19, 1873.

For the gratification of children and children's children, I propose to record some items relating to my Christian experience and labors, and to the kind providence of God to myself and family.

I was born August 28, 1801, in this neighborhood. At an early age, impressions were made of the importance of true religion, by the teachings of Christian parents. These were deepened by the faithful labors of my eldest sister, who took the place of parents in stated instruction, each Sabbath, from the Assembly Catechism, which each of the younger children was accustomed to recite. While she applied those great truths practically, my own heart was often affected, yet without immediate saving effect. At the age of twelve I lost a school-

mate, who was drowned. His death awakened interest, and led me for a time to seek spiritual blessings. But soon after, I was employed in a store, and active, passing scenes diverted my mind, and I remained without earnest effort until 1820. When between eighteen and nineteen years of age, my sister, Mrs. Holden, was suddenly stricken down by death, in the month of February. Just before her death, she had conversed faithfully with me. That conversation, together with her death, led me to deep interest, and to the conviction that then there was a special call, and it might be the last. Indeed, I felt that if I neglected *that* call I might utterly fail of eternal life.

With such impressions, I listened to the faithful preaching of Dr. Gardner Spring, of New York, and attended the inquiry meetings at his dwelling-house. In April of that year, I cherished a Christian hope, and in July united with his church, in connection with Esquire Holden, my brother-in-law, who soon became an elder, and was spared nearly forty years to be a pillar in that church, and a firm friend and helper of its excellent pastor.

In September of that year, I left the position of clerk in my brother's store, to commence study in Bradford, Mass., preparatory for college. After a few weeks' experiment in study, I settled upon the course with a view of entering the Christian ministry, and continued my preparation with Dr. Ide, entering Brown University in September, 1821.

I graduated in 1825, and at once entered upon a theological course of study with Dr. Ide. After a few months, I went to Andover, and remained for two years, during which time I improved opportunities to labor directly in various ways, having classes in the Sabbath-schools, and sustaining social services in the districts surrounding. During the vacation of 1826, I was privileged to engage in a special work for Sabbath-schools.

There had been formed the Union Society, comprising the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Episcopalians, for the purpose of encouraging Sabbath-schools throughout the Commonwealth. As agent of this society, I visited fifty-two Sabbath-schools, by calling on the pastors or superintendents, or both. Libraries

were then being formed and systems of teaching by question-books introduced. To encourage these movements, and to awaken a deeper interest in the object of Sabbath-schools was the design of this agency.

At this time there was an interesting work in progress in Lowell, which continued almost without interruption for successive years. In this work I was privileged to cooperate, by visiting Lowell from time to time, and by spending one vacation there, during which the special presence of the Holy Spirit was experienced, in the hopeful conversion of nearly one hundred.

The writer's acquaintance with David Sanford commenced in Brown University, more than half a century ago. Being both Massachusetts boys, and rooming near to each other, we soon became intimately acquainted.

In person Mr. Sanford was tall and slight, with a face beaming love and kindness. His deportment was that of a Christian gentleman,—always courteous, kind, pleasant, and accommodating to all.

If a fellow-student were in trouble, he was among the first to sympathize with, and comfort him. He always sought out those who seemed to have the fewest friends. If one needed money, he would give it to him, even to his last dollar.

The students had a weekly prayer-meeting. I doubt if there was a single man that entered college whom Mr. Sanford did not invite to attend that prayer-meeting. I doubt if he was absent from one of those meetings during his whole college course. He took a leading position in them, and ever encouraged those who were diffident and younger than himself.

One year, the meetings would not have been sustained, but for Mr. Sanford's presence in college. Another weekly meeting was held, that of the "Theological Society," where doctrinal questions were debated, in which Mr. Sanford participated; but he always endeavored to give the discussion a practical turn, thus to have it result in good.

He economized time to the utmost. Like Wesley, his industry was almost without a parallel. Every Sunday morning he walked to Olneyville, on the west side of the city, to attend a Sabbath-school composed of poor children, where his labor was greatly blessed; nearly all his class were converted. But his work was not confined to Olneyville; North Providence and Seekonk shared in it, while he always had a class at the Richmond Street Congregational Church, where he worshipped. Even in his college days, he could have said he was "in labors more abundant" than any of his fellows. He escaped unscathed all the snares of college life. His words were "fitly spoken" "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." His chief efforts, however, and those which accomplished the most good, were his personal conversations with students. He was so affable and pleasant he could approach and converse with all upon religious subjects, without giving offence. He often selected individuals who were living without Christ, and made them subjects of prayer. He used to enumerate students whom he believed were led into the path of life by this means.

While pursuing his studies at Andover, he was

among the most active in religious matters, both in and out of the seminary. He exhibited the same engagedness there that had characterized him in college. He worked in the Sunday-schools of that place with great efficiency. He visited, as an agent, fifty-two Sabbath-schools throughout the Commonwealth, during one vacation. Wherever he went, special blessings followed his labors. Who can estimate the happy results of those visits, after the lapse of half a century?

Lowell was then a small village, in which no Congregational Church existed. Thither he walked, ten miles, Saturday nights, to spend the Sabbath laboring among the operatives. While I was preaching at Lowell in 1873, remembering the great and lasting revival which commenced under his labors, I wrote to Mr. Sanford, making inquiries about that work. He sent to me the following letter in response:—

MEDWAY, Oct. 23, 1873.

My Dear Brother:—

Yours of the 21st came to hand. 'I was glad to receive it, and to know that you are engaged in the good work in Lowell. I wish it was in my power to aid in the special object of next Sabbath. The three to whom you allude as starting the first prayer-meeting, I am unable to identify; I think Deacon William Davidson was one, and Deacon Joshua Tucker another.

My first acquaintance with Lowell was in 1826, forty-seven years ago, while at Andover. Brother Schaufler (afterwards missionary) and myself walked out ten miles, on Saturday afternoon. In the evening there was a meeting in a private dwelling. It was deeply interesting; a number were present who were evidently inquiring the way to Christ. The next day, I

think, Dr. Cornelius preached in the hall to a crowded and solemn audience. He was followed by Dr. Woods, Dr. Braman, and others. Every Sabbath service seemed to tell in a most happy manner. I continued to go out on Saturday, and return on Monday, and at length spent an entire vacation in laboring through the week in the boarding-houses and private families, while the pulpit was supplied by those faithful men of God. There was hardly a day passed without some case of interest, or a day when persons did not call at my boarding-house, to converse upon the great subject relating to their own souls. This state of things continued for two or three years. Hundreds became hopeful subjects of the grace of God. At a single accession to the church, eighty came forward to profess Christ before they had any pastor. The examination of the candidates devolved on the deacons and myself; these deacons were remarkable men, both thoroughly acquainted with the human heart, and men of deep Christian experience. Brother Schaufler, you know, was afterwards the missionary of the American Board. Brother Dwight also went out and labored there, and others, whose lives have told so happily on the interests of men.

We were accustomed to hold meetings in the boarding-houses, where were twenty or thirty or forty boarders, spending perhaps twenty-five or thirty minutes in singing and prayers and exhortations, almost always finding some one, or more, who wished for personal conversation.

An incident of much interest occurred on the Appleton Corporation. The work had become so general among the operatives in one of the mills, that the overseers became disturbed, and made complaint to the general agent. This agent sent a person to go into all the families where our meetings were held, and hear the testimony of those who kept boarders. They said that our meetings were always orderly, and that their boarders were more steady, more industrious, and more contented by having those meetings. The result was that we had full permission to hold the meetings, and the good work continued to advance.