

New Religious Movement in a Maine Town.

Chief Apostle Sandford Casts Out Devils.

Starts With a Wheelbarrow to Build a Tabernacle.

From the Lewiston Journal.

Durham, Me., June 22.—Down behind a big sand hill in Durham is the home of the "Holy Ghost and us" Bible School. Not only is the Bible school located here, but here also are the headquarters of the most picturesque and ambitious religious project launched in Maine for many a day. This is nothing less than "The World's Evangelical Crusade on Apostolic Principles," as planned and set in operation by that zealous young enthusiast, Rev. F. W. Sandford, who heals by faith and by faith drives out devils.

Briefly, the idea is this. Rev. Mr. Sandford, who is a graduate of Bates College, and who has been a brilliant Free Baptist clergyman, suddenly became under conviction that Christianity had wandered far from what Christ preached and designed it to be. Therefore, he gave up his charge and handsome salary and went back to the methods of apostolic times.

Mr Sandford says that he isn't trying to break up the Quaker Church or any other church. He is simply preaching the Word as God has expounded it to him, he says. He doesn't believe in churches at all, except a Universal church. Therefore, says Mr Sandford, if a person comes to him and wants to be baptized and is sincere, he proposes to baptize that person without regard to church affiliation. On this account are the churches bridling and frowning at Mr. Sandford, so he and his friends assert.

As I have said, the home of the Crusade is in Durham. In a quiet country neighborhood about two miles from Lisbon Falls stands a weather-beaten old farmhouse, unpainted and tottering. It came into Mr Sandford's hands through the kindness of friends. Until they settled here the evangelist and his loyal wife had lived in as humble a lodging in the rural portions of Gardiner and in other places in this section of the state. They obey literally scriptural injunctions in their methods of life and whatever their spiritual guide commands them to settle, and under whatever circumstances they obey with implicit faith. Thus directed they have come to the old house in Durham.

In the north end of the house is the room set apart for public worship. The rest of the house is devoted to family uses and the accommodation of the "Holy Ghost and us" Bible school. This peculiar name is taken from the passage of Scripture in Acts xv. 23.

It is a quaint community that is gathered under this old Durham roof tree. In the first place there are Mr and Mrs Sandford, "housekeepers for God." For their enthusiasm and devotion there are no adequate words of description. Both are cultured people. Mrs Sandford before her marriage resided in New York city. She was reared in luxury, for her father was prominent in Wall at and was at one time worth \$300,000. There is touching romanticism in the extraordinary step these two young people have taken.

In 1884 Rev. Mr Sandford was pastor of a church at Great Falls, N. H., and was receiving \$1500 per year.

That he with his wife should leave this comfortable place, and without money or prospects should go boldly out into the world was an act so surprising that it was not at all strange that people generally should question their sanity.

He resolved to cut loose from all churches and go back to the simplicity of apostolic times.

"Will you go?" he asked his wife. "It means great self-denial. It means long wanderings perhaps homelessness. It may lead us to rags and perhaps to a cave. But will you go?"

"I will," she answered.

At Durham Evangelist Sandford is educating disciples for the work that he has planned. They are young men, for the most part, sturdy and browned young fellows, chosen from the ordinary walks of life, as Christ chose his disciples. Among the most convincing speakers and most effective workers of the disciples are a family of actors from Lewiston, a young man once connected with Forepaugh's circus, a young mechanic saved from a drunkard's fate, a "Holy Ghost barber," so called, and a "Hallelujah fiddler." Below is the "platform" of the school:—

The terms are gospel, "without money and without price." At least two hours daily is expected of each student in the interests of the school. The expenses for board and room rent will be \$1 per week, and poor students not having that sum need not fear to apply, provided God sends them.

Each student is to furnish his or her room, and provide table utensils for personal use, but when without means to do so, God manages it for those He sends. There is not a penny behind this work—no influential men (among men), no wealthy ones—and we do not wish any until they, too, are God-sent. We have God and beside Him there is none else. The school stands for abandonment to God's providences as absolutely as to God's word. "Seek not what ye shall eat, nor where-withal ye shall be clothed." We have only one question to ask during each moment of time—"What do you wish me to do, Lord?" Knowing his will we do it; He manages the rest. We do not believe that Christ, after His sermon on the Mount, said "Peter and John will now pass the hat for a collection." Following unhesitatingly in the footsteps of the Great Apostle and of the twelve, we never take collections and are able to give at least this part of the Lord's reply to those sending unto us. "Go your way and tell what things ye have seen and heard, to the poor the Gospel is preached." Endued with the Holy Ghost, and having received "the best gifts" the Spirit will divide unto us, we stand ready to start at any moment for any part of this globe under the auspices of the Original Missionary Board.

A few days ago some members of a church sent a ragged old tramp around to apply for admission. Tramping Tommy was graciously received and invited in by Mr Sandford, who told him if he really wanted instruction in religious matters he was welcome, but that if he didn't belong there by right of sincerity God would send him away.

"I shall not send you away," said Mr Sandford, "but God will do it himself." The man remained for only one meal. Whether it was the provender or self-condemnation that drove the tramp away, he left no word behind.

The Bible school is undergoing constant change in membership. The disciples as they may be termed, are coming and going continually. There are now five tents connected with the school, and young evangelists on call, start out into the country districts with these and do missionary work. Others come in for more instruction and direction and at all times the zealous fraternity at the old home is busy and devoted.

Mr Sandford, before the close of the present season hopes to have a hundred tents in the field, well-manned by earnest young men who have received instruction at his Bible school. One disciple, John Henry Dougless, a Quaker convert, is now coasting along Maine in a missionary yacht, "The Truth."

The yacht is the latest addition to the Crusade, and is a commodious craft that will seat 75 persons.

East of the Bible school is a tall hill, the top of which is bald barren and sandy. The rains have beaten off the soil and the winds have blown off the sand down to the gravel stratum. It is a desolate place enough, to be sure, but here God has commanded that Evangelist Sandford erect the tabernacle. Already the preacher and the disciples have moved several thousands of feet of earth with a wheelbarrow.

The corner-stone will be laid July 4, and Mr Sandford affirms that he has had a revelation that the building will be ready to dedicate July 4 1897. There will be a grand three days' convention this year at Durham, continuing through July 2-4.

The services are entirely unconventional and are as severely simple as those when Christ talked by the wayside.

Often sinners break out in the midst of the discourse into prayer for their souls, and frequently converts grow so happy that they leap up and interrupt the speaker with the testimonies.

Mr Sandford has recorded many instances of notable conversions, and from them I

select an example or so, particularly interesting.

A person nearly 50 years of age, who styled himself the wildest man in Maine, had spent years in the wild West, had not been inside a church for over 30 years, was soundly saved with his two sons and with his entire family is now on the way to heaven, or, as he expresses it, were all tucked in for glory.

A young man of great force who had deeded to buy a tent and expose the errors of preachers in gospel tent, or, as he expresses it, preach for the devil, wonderfully delivered from Satan. Tobacco habit broken, profanity removed, stock of novels burned and his entire being aflame with God's love, has taken charge of a gospel tent. Family of five all saved and rejoicing in God. We call him Hallelujah John, and his hallelujah is often a sermon in itself.

More remarkable than all, however, are some of the faith cures reported from the "Hallelujah Camp-ground" at Durham. Mr Sandford says that one lady, who had four of her ribs broken by being thrown from a carriage, was instantly healed in answer to prayer. Many cases of this sort are related.

Mr Sandford also believes in the strict interpretation of the Biblical statements regarding the casting out of devils. He possesses this power as well as that of healing by the laying on of hands.

Mr Sandford's most notable exploit in the way of exercising evil spirits was when he cast the devil out of his mother's limb, a singular undertaking described by him very vividly. His mother had been very sick with sciatica, he says, and special prayer offered for her recovery, as well as anointing and laying on of hands had failed to deliver her from anguish. So Mr. Sandford was sent for. He says—

Upon my arrival she told me that she felt positive that she was healed the day she was anointed, yet the pains had come on each night, the last two or three being fearful in the awful agony endured, and that she had felt she must see me about it; as she could bear it no longer. "Why it seems as if the very fangs of the devil are fastened into my limbs nights. I can't express it any other way, she said. It seems something more than sickness. The pain seems devilish." Well, mother, something is wrong somewhere. I know God heard our prayers. He don't lie, and we laid hands on you in His name. I will go up stairs and pray and you do so here, and we will ask God to reveal the reason you are not delivered. I had scarcely dropped upon my knees in the chamber above before God said to me plainly, It is the devil. Within one minute from the time I left her I said, Mother, God tells me it is the devil. Well, Frank, I feel the same, I believe it is the devil rather than disease. Thank God for anointed eyes with which to perceive, as well as anointed ears with which to hear. Though I had never been taught this by man, yet the great Teacher, the Holy Ghost had shown me that while the prayer of faith would save the sick, the command of faith must cast out devils, Mark xvi 16. Accordingly in His name I commanded the devil to leave my mother's limb. Some may smile at this, but I wish to tell you that two weeks of fearful and almost unendurable agony ended when that command was given. My mother slept like an infant that night, and the agony never returned.

Astonishing scenes are witnessed at these gatherings in the remoter neighborhoods. On this account there is considerable of what the saints term "yelping of the devil."