

MISCELLANEOUS.

BIOGRAPHY OF DANIEL SPENCER.

"I was one of eleven children, born to Daniel Spencer and Chloe Wilson, my birth being on the 20th day of July, 1794, at West Stockbridge, Berkshire county, Massachusetts. My father enlisted in the Continental Army at the age of sixteen, and remained with it until he witnessed the surrender of Yorktown. He was the son of Peter and Ruth Emmons Spencer. Peter was a descendant of Gerard Spencer, who settled at Lynn, Mass., in 1645, and whose daughter Mahitable married Daniel Cone, who was the first Cone that settled in America. The site of Hadam, Conn., was purchased of the Indians, March, 1662. In the fall of that year Gerard Spencer, Daniel Cone and twenty six others, founded the settlement there. Gerard Spencer was also a member of the state assembly of Connecticut; his English ancestors were numerous in Bedford, England.

"During my childhood the young and growing family of my father left no surplus means over and above their kind and generous support. Both parents were members of the Baptist Church. They gave their children excellent advice by precept and example, and were held in high esteem by their neighbors, both rich and poor. They sent me to the district school during the winter months, until I was about eleven years of age. Through this opportunity I obtained a fair common school education. At twelve years of age I was set to freighting marble with team to Hudson, distant about thirty miles. At the age of fourteen I was placed in charge of my father's farm, and was accorded much praise for my successful management. In these early years I indulged a desire and hope to at some time become a merchant. At the age of nineteen years I promised my father if he would let me begin life on my own account I would present him with the first hundred dollars I could save up. He consented to this, and I hired to one Joseph Cone, living at Harrowiston, Litchfield county, Conn., who sent me with team and wagon loaded with merchandise to sell in North and South Carolina. I worked for him two years and then entered business on my own account, and soon had several of my brothers engaged with me in merchandising in the two States above named, and in Georgia and Alabama. We spent the winter south, and the summer in the New England States. I made quite an amount of money; was enabled to do much more for my father than the hundred dollars I had promised him. About 1820 I entered into mercantile business in my native town, forming a copartnership with Charles and Bitson Boynton as silent partners. I turned in most of my salary as manager, together with profits, into the general store, intending in time to become sole proprietor. During the time of this partnership I embraced Mormonism. Not long after this these two took the benefit of the bankrupt act, through which I lost much means. Charles Boynton afterwards became a minister, and acted as chaplain in the House of Congress. Sharp criticisms of their course in bankruptcy were very prevalent, and I presume

would have been much more so if a Mormon had not been the chief loser.

"January 21st, 1823, I was married to Sophronia E. Pomeroy, who was the daughter of General Grove Pomeroy (who was a member of the State Assembly of Massachusetts, I think in the year 1801-2) by whom I had one son, Claudius Victor. She died October 5th, 1833. Something over two years after her death I married Sarah Lester Van Schoonoven, who bore me two sons, who died early, two daughters, Amanda and Mary Leone.

"In my early years I had entertained great reverence for God, and had sought Him often in secret prayer, but could not unite with any of the churches. Nevertheless, at one time there came to me the conviction that baptism by immersion was essential, and I journeyed about forty miles to my brother Orson's, who was a Close Communion Baptist minister, and he buried me in the water in the likeness of the burial and resurrection of Christ; but I refused to take membership in the Baptist Church.

"During the winter of 1838 I met a Mormon Elder on the street of our town, who said he had been trying through the day to get a place where he could preach. He was poorly clad, and some of his extremities were frost bitten, and he was altogether a peculiar looking minister. Being chairman of the school board, I told him he could have the school house to preach in, and I sent Edwin Morgan (who for many years since has been hotel keeper at Lee, Mass.,) to light and warm the room. When Morgan reached the house he found parties inside who had locked him out and refused him admission. When he reported this I told him to take an axe, and if the parties did not open the door, to chop it up, and warm the room with it. I took pains to spread notice of the meeting, sent my son to invite the Presbyterian minister, Nathan Shaw, to go with me to hear the Elder. His answer was: Tell your father I would as soon go to hear the devil preach. This coming from an old friend, from one noted for his guarded and sanctimonious speech, seemed to be marvelous. Later experience has solved it. The meeting was largely attended by members of the different churches, but at the close, when the Elder stated that he was a stranger, 1300 miles from home, without purse or scrip, and asked if any one would keep him over night, for Christ's and the Gospel's sake, not an answer came from any Church member. After a painful silence I stepped from my seat into the open aisle, and invited him home with me. I refused to discuss Mormonism with him, and next morning I took him to my store and clothed him comfortably. In about a month he came again. I obtained for him the Presbyterian meeting house, and entertained him as before. On leaving he left some books; these I read and soon became interested to the extent that I closed my store and business, and gave my whole attention to comparing the claims of the Mormons with the Bible; and one forenoon, while reading the Book of Mormon, the conviction came to me with great power that Mormonism was true, and in-

voluntarily I exclaimed: My God, it is true, but it will cost me friends, kindred, and all I have on earth.

"A few days after this I sent notice to the entire towns people that at noon of a certain date, I should be baptized by the Mormon Elder, being the only one to accept Mormonism. A vast concourse came to see the ice broken in the river, and the ordinance performed. After I was confirmed, I spoke to the people in a new language, which knowing me as they did, created a profound sensation. I was ordained an Elder and did much preaching in Berkshire county.

"On the 19th of April, 1840, Elder Frank in D. Richards and Elder Stephen Burnham organized a branch in our town of thirty members, among these was a merchant by the name of Crandall, and his wife, sister of Senator Conkling; another merchant by the name De Vol, who for some years was a judge at Council Bluffs, and still another merchant, a Mr. Hunt. Indeed, without exception, the standing of the members in society was of the best, and few sections of our country have had greater testimonies of the truth of Mormonism than did that region. From the adjoining town came the Richards family, prominent for so many years among our people.

"After my baptism my good father and mother and my good Baptist brother Orson told me in an interview that they did not wish any further association with me until I gave up my awful delusion. However, in time I performed the same ordinance for my brother as a Mormon Elder that he had once performed for me as a Baptist Elder, and I had the pleasure of gathering father and mother to Nauvoo.

"I had accumulated considerable property, owning pretty largely of real estate; but I learned that a general impression prevailed that all Mormons must gather to Nauvoo, and that this property would be got from me very cheap if they combined to withhold offers. Under these circumstances I approached a man who had been for some time trying to sell a heavily wooded and timbered farm with shares in a mill, and told him that I would give so much for the property on condition that no one should know my offer until the execution of the deeds. He complied with this, and as soon as the towns-people knew it the reports flew around that I was not going to Nauvoo—that I was too smart to let the Mormon leaders get my means, etc.

"In the meantime I contracted with the proprietor of the Algiers Iron furnace to deliver several hundred cords of wood, bought horses and wagons, entered into business as though I should remain there a life-time, using my mill-right to saw whatever timber was fit into lumber. This placed me on about the same business vantage ground that I held before baptism, which I improved in disposing of all my real estate, except the timber farm, to good advantage. I realized in wood and lumber from the farm almost its first cost, and had it left for sale on the basis that whether it brought much or little it was almost all clear profit. I traded it for a good figure for broadcloth and satin, and, with short warning, in company with my brother Hyrum, Daniel Hendricks and their families and mine, started with teams and wagons for Nauvoo, and in that way have traveled from West Stock-