

CHAPTER 1

A Biographical Synopsis

With the ominous appearance of war clouds in the late 1850s, an Iowa country doctor turned his attention to national defense. Dr. Thomas Grosvenor Daniells, though not a young man, threw himself into the work of drilling a volunteer corps of older men who, because of their age, became known as the Graybeard Regiment, the Thirty-second Iowa Regiment.

At the sound of cannon, when the Civil War was a reality, the doctor, now First Lieutenant Daniells, and his “Graybeards” reported for duty. True to his oath, he ministered to the wounded and ill on both sides. But his age could not keep pace with his spirit, and he died in 1863, leaving his widow, Mary McQuillan Daniells, and three small children, Arthur, five, and twins Charles and Jessie, three, almost destitute. Though Mary Daniells valiantly endeavored to care for her family, she was compelled a year later to place the children in a newly established orphanage. Not until the next year when she married a West Union farmer was she able to bring her children home.

Arthur, who was born at West Union on September 28, 1858, grew up on his stepfather’s two-hundred-acre farm working with sheep, horses and cattle. On the rich Iowa soil he plowed, sowed, and harvested corn and grain. In the woods he gathered and processed maple sugar. Life next to the soil was severe. Moreover, the stepfather’s health began to fail with advancing age, and even the widow’s allotment for orphaned children was being used to buy opiates for the ailing old man.

The strange alchemy of youth manifested itself in a sudden voracious appetite for books and study. “One day the boy said to his mother, ‘I am growing up to be a fool, just an idiot. I am learning nothing and getting no place, and I want an education.’ She replied, ‘Do just what you think is right.’ And so at seventeen he... [left] home with his mother’s consent. He left home without a cent, and with only a pair of overalls and a blue shirt.”¹

With the lad no longer under his stepfather’s jurisdiction, no claim could be made by him upon the government for his keep, but a wise mother managed to secure and save the little stipend for her boy. The

ensuing year found him both at work and at school in Iowa. He managed his board and room by doing chores at the home of a doctor.

But Mary Daniells Lippincott could not be content with a secular education for her son. In 1865 she had become an Adventist, and at ten her son had been converted. As the lad grew older, Battle Creek College beckoned him. Using the eighty dollars of accumulated pension funds, he entered Battle Creek College and spent his eighteenth year there.

It was a Spartan year. He lived in a private home with four other boys, subsisted largely on broken crackers which the landlord gave him in return for having his wood sawed. Arthur mowed grass around the Review and Herald office and did various jobs to make ends meet. The combination of a poor diet with long hours of study weakened his health. The following summer while working in the harvest, he was overcome with severe sunstroke. When he attempted the next school term, he would at times lose consciousness while sitting at his desk. He was advised, therefore, to withdraw.

While at Battle Creek College, Arthur for a time ate his meals at the home of Professor Sydney Brownsberger. A young lady, Mary Ellen Hoyt, whom Arthur had known from childhood, also took meals there. It happened that under the very roof of the college president, romance blossomed. One could scarcely ask for a more authentic chaperonage! The couple was married November 30, 1876.

While both were engaged in teaching public school in 1877, E. W. Farnsworth, Iowa Conference president, held a series of meetings near West Union. Arthur and his young wife attended. One spring morning as Arthur was walking to school and pondering his spiritual condition, he turned aside to pray. The words "Go, work in My vineyard," were brought forcibly to his mind and troubled him all during the day. They persisted so that he could neither eat his supper nor concentrate upon composing a letter to arrange for summer school attendance.

The conviction persisted. He was especially agitated because of a speech impediment which he felt precluded public work. Two weeks later, still wrestling with conviction, he made his way to a straw stack and found a place where the cattle had eaten a hole in it. He crawled in, and this straw cave became his Bethel. On his knees he promised God that he would work in His vineyard. His spirit was immediately relieved.

His decision was characteristically unconditional. Though he offered his services to Farnsworth as a ministerial candidate and was

rejected by the committee, he was undaunted. He was as determined now as he had been diffident before.

Ever since the General Conference had voted to send R. M. Kilgore to develop a conference in the new state of Texas, early in 1877,² a steady stream of exciting news notes of Kilgore's experiences appeared in the columns of the Review and Herald. They carried reports of baptisms, of tornado, flood, debate, threat, eviction, etc., and caught the interest of young Daniells. Following these interesting accounts one finally reads the following from Kilgore, under the now familiar heading "Texas Tent":

"Rockwall, June 29. - ... We moved to this place, the county-seat of Rockwall County, a village of about two hundred and fifty or three hundred inhabitants. It is well settled in the immediate vicinity. We hope for good results, and shall labor and pray to that end

Brother A. W. Jenson has been acting as tent master. His place is now supplied by Bro. A. C. Daniells, of Iowa, who has come to labor with us."³

Daniells, now twenty, had, at his own expense, journeyed to Texas, his wife later joining him, and had offered his services. While there he preached his first sermon in a little schoolhouse at Sand Branch. In a few minutes he completed his sermon which he had felt would last him one or two hours!

James and Ellen White arrived in Texas in December of 1878 to meet with the new believers and decided to stay until the following summer. Arthur and Mary Daniells were assigned to join them in their home and assist these pioneer workers. Thus began an association with Ellen White which was destined to be close for some thirty-seven years.

Looking back years later upon his call to the ministry, Daniells remarked: "The Spirit of Cod has caused me to feel that the ministry, the ambassadorship of Christ, is the highest office that can be conferred upon any human being. That I know has been conferred upon me by my Redeemer. He called me to His work with a power I could not resist, when no man would choose me."⁴

This conviction had driven him into the ministry. It was his staying power in the midst of crisis years. This man had a sense of mission that was invincible throughout life. Without recognizing this, no one can understand A. G. Daniells.

After two years in Texas, 1878-1880, Daniells was again on his own and resorted to assisting a blind brother who was selling an

autobiographical brochure. Mary journeyed back to Iowa to visit her parents.

In 1880 G. I. Butler invited Daniells to preach in Iowa, and after two years he was ordained. While in Iowa he was a successful soul winner and engaged in a type of evangelism then known as city-mission work for a period of six years.

In 1886 Daniells responded to a call to New Zealand, arriving there on the thirteenth of November. It was virgin territory, and he was but the third Adventist minister south of the equator at that time. Building upon the labors of S. N. Haskell, who had begun work there a few months prior, he developed a conference of approximately 250 members by 1891.

Because of ill health Daniells was transferred to Australia and a year later was elected president of the Australian Conference of some 700 members. Ellen White and her son, W. C. White, were now in Australia, and with their counsel the work steadily developed during the eight years Daniells served as president there.

In 1900 Daniells left Australia to visit South Africa and England en route to the United States to attend the General Conference of 1901, where he was chosen chairman of the General Conference Committee, in reality the world president of the church. He was the church's chief executive for a period of twenty-one years.

Four special lines of endeavor summarize his labors. They include: (1) reorganization of the church; (2) world missions advance; (3) city evangelism promotion; and (4) righteousness by faith emphasis.

For the final thirteen years of his life he served the denomination in turn as its secretary, then as its ministerial association secretary, a post he held at the time of his death in 1935.