

PROLOGUE  
to Ida Farr's 1872 Journal  
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Grandmother Ida's 1872 journal opens with a paragraph containing the mournful statement: "Six years ago Father sent us away so he could live alone with Mrs. Ladow...." It will be startling to those of the family who do not know why Eleazer and Charity parted in 1866, after twenty nine years of marriage. It does not seem so shocking in this day and age as it must have been then. The young Ida, so idealistic and devout, apparently felt degraded by her father's "fall from grace." Yet the filial tie was still strong, and she mentions in her diary that she wrote a letter to her father.

The thought will come to such readers; "How could the Reverend Eleazer throw off the bonds of his rigid Calvinistic faith and behave in such a heartless and irresponsible fashion?" If he had remained in New Hampshire hill towns this situation would probably never happened, but cosmopolitan Philadelphia widened his horizon immeasurably.

This young minister had a brilliant mind which was challenged by many new experiences. He also had a charismatic personality which fostered lasting friendships with other intellectuals, and made him comfortable with people in all walks of life. The framed picture of the Reverend Doctor Eleazer Farr which is displayed in the Goshen Community Church ( he was responsible for its building and was its first pastor) shows him as a handsome man. Undoubtedly he was attractive to women, putting him at risk in his capacity as both doctor and pastor. The Farr family was living in Germantown, Pennsylvania, at the time of the Civil War. Grandmother Ida remembered seeing army ambulances pass their house as the wounded were transported to the hospitals. She also remembered schoolmates coming to school in tears because fathers or brothers had been killed in the carnage of war.

It is more than likely that the woman he became romantically involved with was a war widow, who came to him as a patient, arousing his sympathy. The sympathy turned into something which, I am sure, he never foresaw or intended. Whether he was physically unfaithful to Charity before they parted is beyond all knowing. He spent his last few years with Ida and her husband, Hial Nelson. He confided to his eighteen-year old grandson, Walter, "It was never Charity's fault; it was mine alone." There was an additional admission that he had attended a seance, where the medium told him that a woman with money would come into his life. (There was a book on astrology in his personal library which I foolishly sold some years ago. Did he dabble in the occult and felt that this was the voice of fate? The late Reverend Peter Marshall had a similar experience, but the medium told him that her seance was no place for him, and he left.)

I cannot believe that the Charity portrayed on page 32 in "The Supplement to the History of Goshen", would submit humbly to being dismissed like an offending servant. She looks like a proud woman of spirit and dignity. Being a compulsive novelist, I like to think the scenario of the family drama which occurred more than a century ago, was played so: Charity, fed up with her errant husband's behavior, delivered an ultimatum, "If you do not stop seeing Mrs. Ladow, I will leave you, Eleazer." Her words did not register in his bemused mind. It was beyond belief that that this faithful woman, this companion (as he termed her affectionately in one of his journals) who had followed him uncomplainingly from pillar to post, would take such a momentous step. He continued his amorous pursuits.

One day he came in from his office to find her emptying the dish cupboard and packing the contents in a barrel. (The proper way to ship dishes in those days,) "What are you doing, Charity?" he asked in amazement. "I am leaving you, Eleazer. The children and I are going to

live with Oren and Nellie." Her husband was speechless with shock. "I warned you," she added quietly, and took down the last cup to pack, leaving the cupboard empty.

I envision the doctor standing sadly on the doorstep, watching his family depart. Perhaps the bewildered eight-year-old Elmer had to be restrained from running back to give his father a last embrace. I am sure Eleazer was a loving parent. Ida remembered rolling pills for him in his office. In later years, Elmer signed his letters to Eleazer, "affectionately", indicating that he had known love in the home he had to leave at such an early age. The head of that now-empty house must have realized at that point that he was paying a much higher price for his "amour" than he had ever imagined. His daughters' faces must have registered a mixture of sadness and scorn. They had to pass the home of Mrs. Ladow on their way to school. One day in passing, one of the older girls hissed vindictively, "Bitch!", as they went by. Ida had never heard that word and looked at her sister in surprise and question. The twelve-year-old was appalled and unbelieving at the answer. It was soon after this that the family break-up came.

I expect there were many times when he wished for the ministrations of "lovely Charity", as his own father called her. There was no one to comfort his aches and pains that he had often mentioned in earlier diaries. It is evident that his amour expected to be waited on hand-and-foot, for a cousin of Charity's who called on the couple after a few years, reported that Mrs. Ladow treated him like a servant, ordering him to do this and that for her, in spite of his lameness from arthritis. Can we not imagine that the story was told with some gleeful satisfaction?

I will cease my fantasizing and try filling in the background relevant to Grandmother Ida at age eighteen.

Ida's father, Eleazer Davis Farr, started working with a cabinet maker in Newport at age fourteen; when he was sixteen, made a rocking chair for his mother Polly (still in the family in the care of Jack Newman) and before his marriage to Charity Tandy, made a bureau for her. I understand it was a piece of excellent workmanship which was given to Elmer Farr. (It has now gone out of the family.) There is no record of how he and Charity met. She had become an accomplished needlewoman. Perhaps she worked with a dressmaker in Newport to learn the trade. She was twenty three when she married the twenty-one-year-old Eleazer, well on the way to being an old maid. (In Goshen marriage records I find girls as young as fifteen listed as brides, and many of seventeen and eighteen.)

After their marriage in 1837, Eleazer and Charity lived with his parents in Marlow, New Hampshire. I expect that Oren was born there. (October, 1838.) He apparently was an active, mischievous child for one of his aunts shook her head and said, "Oren will grow up to be either a very good man or a very bad man!"

It is probable it was his association with the Calvinistic Baptist Tandy family that influenced his decision to become a minister. He went to New Hampton, New Hampshire, where he attended the New Hampton Bible Institute. Charity and little Oren went with him. Her brother, Lorenzo Tandy, was fired with the same aspiration, and followed them there. He had written them of his plan and Charity wrote back at once, asking him to bring her silver spoons. (What fascinating sidelights old family letters provide!) Eleazer did not stay long, for he was haunted by the thought of so many sinning souls in the world that must be saved, and <sup>felt</sup> he must get busy trying to bring them salvation. He and the little family went back to his father's home in Marlow. His diary of that period tells of preaching in schoolhouses in neighboring towns.

He helped support his family by taking interior painting jobs wherever he could find them. One entry in his diary tells of decorating a sleigh in the wheelwright shop near the mill dam in Goshen. He worked until ten o'clock at night , then walked home to Marlow. Another entry mentions painting the woodwork in the Joshua Booth house. (Later owned by Walter Nelson. Eleazer's artificial-graining handwork is still evident in the north room of that house.)

Eventually he became the pastor of the Baptist church in Dublin, New Hampshire. His journal of that period describes the warm welcome of the parishioners. There must have been two more children by that time, Alice Maria Gunnison, (Charity kept her promise to name her first girl for her best friend, Captain John Gunnison's sister.) and Almina. Charity's younger sister, Mary, was with them, probably to help take care of the children. Eleazer gave her lessons; he was a believer in education, and at a later date planned to start an academy. He wrote in his diary that one day he found his wife crying. When he asked the reason for her tears, she sobbed that she felt so stupid. He comforted her by promising to make up some lessons for her.

While in Dublin, he helped raise the church building to provide a room underneath. He wrote in his diary of drawing up the plans for the building. (Where did he pick up drafting?) Later, he drew up the plan for the church in Goshen, and two years later for his own big house which he thought to use for an academy. What a multi-faceted man he was! (Some years ago I made an inquiry about that church and found that it was still in existence, but had been moved to another site.) In spite of the building activities in which he took an active part, he had time to help his wife with the washing. That is mentioned several times in his journal.

The next chapter in his life took place in Lowell, Massachusetts. I can find no information as to how it came about, but he spent some time there as a colporteur. The dictionary states this explanation: "A person who distributes Bibles and religious tracts, for free or at a low price." He probably acted as a representative of a religious organization, and received a small salary. In an account book there is an entry recording a sum which Charity earned finishing vests for a tailor. (Probably she made the buttonholes. Grandmother Ida said that her mother was very critical of the buttonholes she had made, saying, "Those are no better than a pig's eye, Ida!")

Eleazer became very well acquainted with the ministers in Lowell and neighboring cities, and felt comfortable in asking for their help in raising money to build the Baptist church in Goshen at a later time. At that time one of his good friends advised and urged him to be ordained in Lowell. He took the advice, and was ordained there in 1850, though he was preaching in Unity and living again in Marlow. By this time, Nathan, Emily and Sarah had been added to his family.

When the ambitious project of building a Baptist church in Goshen had been completed, the church had been dedicated debt-free, and he had become its first pastor, he embarked on another great idea. He proposed to start an academy. He proceeded to draw up plans for a large house to be built in the corner of Brook and Cross Roads, nearly opposite the District #5 schoolhouse. The Nathan Farr homestead in Marlow was sold. Grandfather and Grandmother became a part of the Reverend Eleazer's household. Certainly there was plenty of room in the big new house. From a photo of it before its demolition in the 1950's, there must have been eight rooms upstairs! The owner reported triumphantly in his current diary that he had finished putting locks on all the doors. Apparently privacy was very important to him. He put locks on even the

cupboard doors in the church, and on the room he occupied at my grandparents' home in his last years.

Eleazer's diary records the birth of Ida Lurinda on December 26, 1854. The last entry was made on January 1, 1855, "I feel that there will be a great change in my life in this new year." The premise was correct. Having given up the idea of an academy, he went to Providence, Rhode Island to attend Brown University. I checked with that institution and found that he took only two or three courses and left before the year was out. One course was in chemistry, which was, of course, absolutely essential to his present plan of becoming a doctor. His mother had passed along to him her knowledge of the medicinal values of herbs and other plants, which he used in various pills and potions of his own manufacture when he was able to start his own practice as a doctor.

From Providence he went to Philadelphia, where he enrolled as a student in the Eclectic School of Medicine. He supported himself by preaching wherever he could, and selling sewing machines. I expect he was quite successful at the latter, for he had a winning personality. The family he left was supporting itself on the farm. In a letter from his daughter, Alice, apparently in answer to his letter begging the family to join him, there is this line from her mother: "Mother thinks it would be too dear (expensive) to live in the city." Alice reported that she and Almira were doing knitting for a merchant in Newport, and that little Ida had a boil on her face. "I never saw such a patient child," she wrote, and continued, "Sarah is standing beside me, her eyes as bright as buttons, saying, 'Tell Father I be good!'".

The older girls went to the nearby schoolhouse. Perhaps their father chose that location for his new home, because of its proximity to the school. One day, little Ida walked through its open door when classes were in session. Her sisters were very ashamed of their little sister with her dirty face.

In 1858, Eleazer had become the pastor of the Baptist church in Cedarville, New Jersey. This time Charity answered his call. Her five daughters and Nathan accompanied her to join him. Oren stayed in the big house with Nathan and Polly Farr. He and his grandmother concocted medicines and sent them to the Reverend Doctor Eleazer. (He had obtained his medical degree by that time and served the town in both capacities.) Grandmother Ida said that they went when she was three and one half years old. Little Elmer was born October 15, 1858, weighing a little over three pounds. (It makes me wonder if he was born prematurely.) He was carried around on a pillow, because he was so tiny. He was the pet of the whole family. Emily died that same year.

The next move was to Bridgeton, New Jersey. Almina had diptheria and came near dying. Nathan had diptheria combined with "membraneous croup" (whatever that would be termed today.) Charity had to leave to tend her husband who was ill back in Cedarville, while on a professional call. She left, thinking the boy was better, but she found him dead when she returned. I think he must have been thirteen or fourteen. I have heard the story about the blue bottle that the family put out every morning for the milkman to fill. Sometimes the container was not full when they took it in. Nathan decided to be a detective and solve the mystery. He discovered that a little black boy was the culprit. He said to the family, "I'm going to fix that black boy." He put milk of magnesia in it, after his mother had emptied the bottle. It did the trick, for the milk was never disturbed again.

Alice was married to Henry Husted while they were still in Bridgeton. Henry came to Doctor Farr as a patient, and seeing Alice's picture on his desk, said, "I'm going to marry that girl." He teased little Ida when he was courting her sister. She tried to hide from him and called him, "bad Hen Husie."

The family lived in Philadelphia a short time, then moved to . -



Germantown, Pennsylvania. In some one of the towns where they lived, the minister-doctor became so busy that he put it up to the townspeople to decide in which capacity he could best serve them. He felt no longer able to follow both ~~professions~~ <sup>professions</sup> at once. They said that they could find another minister, but they could not replace Doctor Farr. I expect he was a doctor only by the time they made this last move.

Grandmother Ida remembered helping her mother when she canned peaches. It was her duty to put her small hand in the jar and place the peaches so the rosy side would show. It shows that Charity was not a haphazard housewife, but one whose sense of order and beauty was reflected in whatever she did. Ida was quite incensed when one of the acquaintances of her young adulthood twitted her about being a country girl, for she had known city life with gas lights and running water at the sink!

During the passage of the years Oren had married his second cousin, Ellen Farr. He was not quite twenty one, and she was eighteen. They were married only a short time before he enlisted and served nine months in the Civil War. Grandfather and Ellen kept the farm going as best they could. Soon after he was discharged from the army, the big house was sold and they went to a farm in Weathersfield, Vermont. They offered their home to the "fugitives" from Germantown, who left the city life they had become accustomed to, with profound sorrow and regret and returned to the country ways to begin a new life without Eleazer.

At the time of Ida's first entry, six years later, Charity was living with her daughter Almina, who had married her second cousin William Dow shortly after the move to Weathersfield. Charity had first spent a while in Goshen caring for her sister Mary Smith, who was very ill. Sarah was doing housework in various households to earn her own living. Oren and Ellen had bought a farm in Goshen Center. Ida and Elmer were still a part of their household.

I thought I had brought my musing to a neat close, but I still have more thoughts that I did not remember at that time. There are family heirlooms that should be mentioned. Two desks of Eleazer's making are in my house. They are definitely "one-of-a-kind", built for certain spots and needs. One is finished with "artificial graining", in which he was very proficient. That piece has beautiful detailing; he must have had a well-equipped workshop for his cabinet making. His mortar and pestle, a large jar of sassafras sticks, (still fragrant after the passage of a century) and several small, round boxes of hand-rolled pills, with his name, "Dr. E. D. Farr of Goshen" on the label. Another heirloom is the metal-divining rod, which he invented to use when he accompanied some friends on treasure-hunting expeditions on the New Jersey coast. I never heard any tales of finding pirate treasure. The little brochure about his success in treating gangrene which was once among his papers has disappeared from my possession. It contained letters from some of his former patients, praising his expertise in curing that affliction.

Another thing that has disappeared from the family is the flag that Charity made while they were in Germantown. When the Civil War ended, the people of that town displayed flags and bunting in celebration. Then came the tragedy of President Lincoln's assassination, and everything was draped in black. Ida loaned it to someone in town, and it was never returned. I wish I had a sample of Charity's fine needlework. I do have two pieces of her wedding china. Grandmother Ida saw some of the pretty glass and china that used to be in her mother's dish cupboard, in Almina's china cupboard. So Charity's dishes really were packed when she left Germantown!

Doris Nelson Newman

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