

My wife, Elisabeth Ayres Kidd, was baptized Bessie Farnan Ayres and was called Bessie until she reached the age of 14. At this time she felt that Elizabeth was somewhat less rural and associated less with the quite universal name for horses and cows of Bess or Bessie. She liked the name Elisabeth and was known by this name for the remainder of her life. However, to her mother, who lived to be 84, she was always Bessie. Likewise at 17 years of age her middle name of Farnan she also felt could be improved upon. It had come to her from the County Cork in Ireland with her grandfather, Dr. Farnan. Elizabeth liked Farnan better and this middle name was with her throughout her college days and until her marriage. Thereafter she was always Elisabeth Ayres Kidd.

Her mother was the daughter of McDill and Dr. Farnan. As such, she was half Scotch Presbyterian and half Irish. Dr. Farnan gave up his affiliation, with the Church of Rome in order to meet the rigid specifications of the Presbyterian McDills. Elisabeth's father was a New Englander of English Scotch descent. Hobart Ayres, however, would have nothing to do with the Presbyterians. He was a Methodist and his Presbyterian wife was persuaded to become a Methodist. The family lived next door to the Sacramento Boulevard Methodist Church in Chicago which is located at Sacramento and Adams Street. Here, Bessie went to the nearby John Marshall School from first grade until graduation from high school. And for many years she played the organ for the church services and listened to the "hell end brimstone" sermons of Dr. Liberton and, after him, the Reverend Mr. Leach.

Bessie was born in this same neighborhood on December 18, 1891. Her father was the inventor of the extension ladder. He was more the musician than business man and had assigned his invention to a company. His partner decided that he wanted the patent rights but did not want Mr. Ayres. He therefore bankrupted the company and purchased back the assets including the patent. As a result of this Mr. Ayres at the time of Bessie's advent was financially in very low circumstances. He decided to remedy this by going to Colorado to prospect for gold. Mrs. Ayres cousin, Karl Schuyler, lived there and was attorney for the mining and railroad interests of the State of Colorado and had been raised at Cripple Creek during the time of the gold excitement. This perhaps accounted for Mr. Ayres decision to dig for gold. The family moved then to Denver in about 1894. About 1898, Mr. Ayres developed an embolism and lost one leg. This ended the quest for gold. Upon returning to Chicago the two apartments next door to the church were purchased and the upper apartment rented. Mr. Ayres then went into the coffee business. The site of this activity was the basement. He purchased different kinds of coffee already roasted and blended these to meet the tastes of the customers who lived nearby. After grinding the blended mix, Bessie would put the individual packages in her little wagon and make the deliveries around the neighborhood. After his leg had healed sufficiently, Mr. Ayres also did carpenter work and actually "uilt three houses in the neighborhood south of Jackson Park near 95th Street. In 1905 Mr. Ayres was admitted to the home for Incurables at 56th Street and Ellis Avenue. He had suffered two strokes and had become partially paralyzed. This home is located close to the University of Chicago and after her last class Elizabeth would take her father for a walk in his wheel chair and then take the long walk across Washington Park to the elevated line and return home to her mother. However, after two years of this long trip back and forth, the two apartment was sold and an apartment at 816 East 56th Street rented. At this point Elizabeth gave up her organist position with the Sacramento Boulevard Church. She did, however, continue to give private piano lessons and also did typing for the correspondence study department of the University.

However, funds from these sources were never sufficient to support herself and her mother but a check each month from cousin Karl would close the gap which had to be closed if Elizabeth was to continue her University courses. But the University was very good to Elisabeth and gave her scholarships.

These scholarships were given strictly because of Elisabeth's very high grades and not because she needed them. But the need of an education was most important to her. Her professors were the great scholars which President Harper attracted to the University. Shorey, Buck, Hale, Moulton, Laing, Miller, Goodspeed.

At 18 years of age she walked into the opening session of one of Dr. classes composed of older students working for the doctor's degree. She carried a large armful of books. Dr. Merrill said "young- lady you must have come to the wrong class". But she was in the right class and completed it with an "A". Once, in an astronomy class of Dr. Moulton's, Elizabeth was the only one who could answer the question and Dr. Moulton said - "and you, a classics student". In calculus and other higher math courses under Dr. Slaughter she received "A"s. But her major courses were Greek and Latin and her grades in those subjects apparently got her her scholarships. There are several of these in her scrap book signed by "Teddy" Linn and others and all state that a condition of the grant of the scholarship is a continuation of her high grades. I think it only proper for me to say that Elizabeth always went to sleep at ten at night. And from hearsay and experience I know that most of the class studied far into the night - - especially for exams. It seems incredible under the hardships of work, the giving of piano lessons, and the typing for Mr. Mallory's, extension courses, that Elisabeth managed to receive a degree from Dr. Florenz Zeigfeld's Chicago Music College. But she did so at the same time as she carried on her University of Chicago study. It also seems incredible that she never considered herself unusual. Throughout her life she always felt that she must do more to merit any consideration. She was always gay, happy, democratic, and enthusiastic in her contacts socially and with those with whom she worked. Her good friends were the janitors as well as the faculty - but of course not all the faculty liked her.

The 92nd Convocation was held August 28, 1914. It announces the recipients of the Phi Beta Kappa key elected to the Beta of Illinois Chapter for special distinction in general scholarship in the University. The name of Elizabeth Farnan Ayres heads the list of ten names. And the 1913 Convocation states "The Bachelor's Degree is conferred with Honors on the following students": Elisabeth Farnan Ayres, and five others. Her name also appears at this Convocation among the Candidates for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts. And at the 95th Convocation held June 15, 1915 the Graduate School candidates for the degree of Master of Arts includes the name of Elizabeth Farnan Ayres and gives the title of her Thesis: "Roman Beliefs Regarding Relations Between Conduct and A Future Life".

On December 16, 1911 Elisabeth Farnan Ayres was elected to membership in Green House and lived there for two years. Her roommate was Ruth M Matthews who died in Burlington, Iowa in 1916. Peritonitis due to a burst appendix. In the 1913 Convocation of the Chicago Musical College Elisabeth Farnan Ayres received a diploma in Piano, Harmony, and Composition.

On Tuesday, April 21, 1914 Elizabeth Ayres appeared in a Mandel Hall Recital playing a Pianoforte Solo, Rhapsodie No. 9 of Liszt. On Thursday Evening at 8

o'clock on the evening of June 5, 1919 a production of the
MOSTELLARIA or THE HAUNTED HOUSE
was presented in Latin by the student-members of the Graduate Classical Club of the
University of Chicago In Boom 214, Emmons Blaine Hall in honor of Professor William
Gardner Hale for 27 years Head of the Department of Latin. The music for this very
ambitious production was composed by Elizabeth Ayres Kidd. Great pains were
taken to use the meter and rhythm of the poetry of Plautus and frequent
consultations with Professor Prescott were held to make the production authentic.
First flutist of the Chicago Symphony played the ever-changing rhythms faultlessly.