

EARL DAVIS — AN EXAMPLE TO HIS FELLOW MEN

Approximately fifty-five years ago, there joined the Billerica community from Auburn, Maine, a young man recently graduated from Bowdoin College. He came to us as Principal of the ~~High~~ Howe School. The Town hadn't started to grow; it was still somewhat of a sleepy New England village. The Pastor of the Unitarian Church, Christopher Coffin Hussey and the Principal of the Howe School, Samuel Tucker had come here as young men in 1867. They were friends, and the two institutions were closely entwined. It was said that these two were getting old and that new blood was needed. So there came to the Unitarian Church a young man, Minot Simonds, and to the Howe School, Marshall Jones. Mr. Simonds was from Harvard, Marshall Jones from Bowdoin. Mrs. Jones stayed but a year or two, long enough to initiate a new era at the Howe School and to organize an Alumni Association. Next year came Earl Davis, and things started to move in the Village. Rustic Howe School boys now began to wear college clothing, athletics were introduced and there came a great interest in Higher education. All the boys wanted to go to College, especially to Bowdoin. Howard Sexton, Albert Holt and Louis Perry did so very shortly. Earl Davis was a jovial, outgoing personality; as he approached you he made a rush and grabbed your hand. It was a rugged experience, formidable to be sure, although violent, it expressed an enormous amount of goodwill and friendship. He was without guile, candid and straightforward. So entirely lacking in all that was ignoble was he, that he seemed not to know that there were qualities among human beings. Perhaps through his friendship with Simonds he became interested in the ministry, attended the Harvard Divinity School, from which he graduated. He married one of his students, Annie Dodge, whose family roots were deeply set in Billerica soil. A fine young couple they were. Annie's inherent dignity somewhat compensated for Earl's rollicking joyousness. He went to Pitts-

field as the minister of the Unitarian Church there. These were tumultuous times; there was much wrong in the world, there were political problems to be solved, social questions to be debated and economic injustices to be righted. He allied himself with the forward-looking, idealistic young clergy who set out to make a better world. Next a pastorate in Concord, N. H., and for the last twenty years Pastor at Petersham, Massachusetts. He identified himself with Petersham body and soul. First, last and forever a Unitarian, his greatest delight was to be the Pastor of the First Parish Church of Petersham. He went into all the activities of the Town, mellow now and capable of a much greater sustained intimacy with his fellowmen; not so troubled with their feelings was he now, but filled with gratitude for their virtues. Meantime, a magnificent family had grown up to maturity, also graduated from Bowdoin and gone out to successful careers in the world. Though blessed with rugged good health, he had a serious illness a few years ago, with a great operation. He met this heroically without complaint, an example to his fellow-men as to how to take it on the chin. But the old trouble caught up with him, and now he is gone. Today, May 21, 1953, the old Church at Petersham was full; not a seat to be had, townspeople, outsiders, many from Boston. There they sat in silence, stirred to their very depths by the eloquent eulogy of Dr. Charles E. Park~~a~~, Pastor Emeritus of the First Church of Boston. Dr. Park~~a~~, the man of all who can choose from the hundreds of thousands of words in the dictionary the very ones to characterize the integrity, straightforwardness and inherent goodness of Earl Davis. We felt the blood tingle in our fingers and in our cheeks, a mistiness in our eyes, as the eulogy came forth from such eloquent lips. A short visit to the home to meet the family, and then the group scattered. What a man, and what a blessing that such men who ask so little of the world, are able to give so much.