2-25-1903

The Wellesley News (02-25-1903)

Wellesley College
Die Beerdigung von Fraulein Carla Wenckebach.

Es war der letzte Tag des alten Jahres, ein strahlend schöner Wintertag! Schimmernd in weissen Schneegewand lagen Thal und Hügel, aber die würzigen! frischen Lüfte erweckten Frühlingsahmungen in unserer Brust. Tiefbåld wühlte sich der Himmel über der Erde, und klare Vogelstimmen jubelten hinaus in die schöne Welt. Aber alle Schönheit und Freude der Natur erreichten keinen Widerhall in unserm Herzen, denn heute sollten wir sie zu Grabe geleiten, die uns Führerin und Freundin gewesen war.

Miss Caswell, Miss Pendleton und Miss Sherrard hatten liebenvoll und fürsorglich all die letzten, traurigen Anordnungen getroffen.


Von zwolf bis halb zwei war die Kapelle für Besucheröffnet, und viele verlangten die Vorste- bene noch einmal zu sehen wünschten. Dann wurde der Sarg geschlossen. Zuerst wurde eine Glastüre herübergerückt und an der oberen Tafel des Sargdeckels ange- schraubt, alles lautlos und unter tiefem Schweigen. Als der Sargdeckel sie ganz verband, trat Miss Hazard hinzu und legte einen grossen Strauss weisser Lilien darauf nieder. Von Freuden und Auf- stellung predigten die zarten Blüten, und wohl verstanden wir Ihre Sprache!

Von Miss Pendleton's Zimmer aus in der Nähe der Kapelle, setzte sich der Zug der Versammelten in Bewegung. Voran schritt die Geistliche der Episkopalkirche in Wellesley, Mr. Nattress, ihm folgten vier Herren von der Fakultät, Herr von Mach und Mr. Young, Mr. Gould und Mr. Morse, als Ehreträger. Ihnen schlossen sich Miss Hazard und Fräulein Müller an. Mrs. Durand und Mrs. Farlow, als Reprä- sentantinnen des Verwaltungsrates, dann Miss Sherrard und Fräulein Mitfahl, Frän- kisch Reuther und Fräulein Stoohr.

Als die ersten Züge die Kapelle betrat, erhoben sich die Anwesenden. Ob- gleich es in der Mitte der Weihnachtsferien war, und die traurige Nachricht erst am Abend des achtundzwanzigsten Dezember hatte ausgesendet werden können, hatten sich dennoch gegen hundert Personen einge- funden, um der Entschlafenen die letzte Ehre zu erweisen. Nachdem die Leidtragenden von allen Seiten, die Sargdeckel, den Sarg, die Tugenden, welche Mitfahl, genannt hatten, während sich der Geistliche zu Hängen desselben versammelt, begann ihre Trauerrede. Denn siches war kurz, aber eindrucksvoll, den Geisterblicke der Episkopalkirche zu erleben, tief und hohl mit dem Untertanen. Darauf sprach die Orgel, den Chor, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," während die Versammelten still die Kapelle verließen. Wir aber hörten in tiefer Führung den Atem der befundenen Klängen, und aus der Melodie lösten sich die Worte:

"Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden, So scheide nicht von mir, Wenn ich den Tod soll leiden, So tritt du dann herbur, Wenn mir am allerbesten Wird an das Herze sein So reiss' mich aus dem Angst, Das Grab, von Angst und Tränen."
A memorial number of College News for Professor Wenekebach was planned some weeks ago, at the request of several people who desired further material than that furnished by the February Magazine. It was to contain an account of the funeral services, an article on 'Freudian Wenekebach's student days, and the speech made at the memorial service by Miss Hodgkins.

It was thought best by the editors to put the account of the funeral service was written by a member of the German Department, in German, and in this statement lies the reason for the long delay which has attended the publication of this number. The difficulty, not hitherto realized by the editors, of having a German article printed in an American office, is very great; the first issue, therefore, in spite of unusual care in the proof-reading, contained so many typographical errors that it was necessary to suppress the whole edition for the week, and bring it out at this late date. This issue contains, in addition, some expressions of appreciation which have come from Freudian Wenekebach's friends and former students.

So much in explanation of the delay. The opportunity, however, of saying a word concerning the manner of getting out the News each week seems too good a one to be lost. There is, naturally, some misunderstanding in College, and on a subject which this incident brings forcibly before our attention; namely, when does the News go to press, how long does it stay there, and why is it not always typographically perfect and out promptly at the minute?

In justice to themselves, the editors are glad to answer these questions; feeling sure that when the News go to press, how long does it stay there, and why it is not always typographically perfect and out promptly at the minute?

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Recollections of Miss Wenckebach’s Student Days.

It was in the years 1870-72, the eventful years of the Franco-Prussian War, that Carla Wenckebach was at school in Hanover. The best institutions in Germany at that time for the education of women were the newly opened “semuaries,” the “Anbildungsanstalten,” under the supervision of the Prussian Commission that gave semi-annual examinations before awarding certificates of scholarship and assurance of fitness for teaching. Among the German girls that came to the seminar in Hanover, eager to take advantage of this new opportunity for thorough study, was Carla Wenckebach. Most of the students were looking forward to the work of teaching, but it was said in the school that she had no need to teach, her parents had consented to her coming in the hope that she would go home again to her large estate in the country prepared to help in the education of her younger brothers and sisters. Into this school but the same time came one American girl, she had been trained in a New England public school and her ambition to get a mastery of the French and German languages had led her across the water. Coming into this school she found opportunities for other study than that of language beyond her expectation. Her private teacher did the wise and kindly thing in commending her to the care of a little set of German girls who made place for her at once among themselves. And so for two years they became inseparable comrades in school life,—“Hans,” the serious, unimaginative student, “Martha,” the noble, sometimes revolutionary spirit, “Laura,” the gentle and the well-born, “Cato” Wenckebach, and the American girl, Miss French whom they promptly christened “Polly, the old-fashioned girl.” After she had introduced them to Miss Alcott. It is to the memories of this American friend that we are indebted for a glimpse of Miss Wenckebach in her student days.

Her little figure,” she writes, “is the most picturesque and unique of the many students I recall. I can see her now as she stood in the large lecture-room, clad in her red Highland plaid dress, made with yoke and belt, buttoned down the back, the round skirt innocent of gored vistas and coming only to her boot tops; her hair, the color of corn silk, worn short, square cut in the neck and drawn straight back from the forehead with a round rubber comb. Her age must have been just eighteen, but the impression made was of sixteen years or younger. If I call her masculine the expression seems too strong, but certainly the carriage was commanding and the whole bearing repudiated everything suggestive of feminine weakness or dependence, a most unusual attitude for a German girl. To the care of this masterful small person who radiated strength, I was commended by our teacher, ‘Cato,’ Miss Wenckebach. I never heard of a girl before who was christened Cato” was my mental comment. It was her true name, an old family name, as I afterwards found. Later she substituted for it the more feminine Carla, and the change was significant, but those days “Cato” suited her well.

Somewhat to my surprise, I have found that it was not the delightful humor that characterized Miss Wenckebach that made the most impression on her comrades in the early days. Rather it was the intense seriousness, power of sustained work, indomitable will that never knew defeat. One incident illustrates her energy. It was a matter of great importance to have seats near the eye of the professor in order to get the most benefit from lectures and quizzes, and seats occupied the first day were held through a semester. “We agreed,” Miss French says, “to get to the seminar early to secure desirable places. I reached a lecture room at 7 o’clock in the morning to find it nearly filled and Cato and the other members of our coterie ranged at the front desks, the best seat of all, the one directly in front of the Professor, reserved for me, the foreigner. Cato and her friend had arisen at four o’clock, proceeded to the building, where they found the doors locked; unable to arouse the sleeping janitor, they had gone around to the back, where Cato had scaled a ten-foot wall, hoisted by Martha, gained admission for himself and her companion and of course had the first choice of seats.” Surely no better protector could a young foreigner have!

And a student could have no more helpful friend. The play-

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Recollections of Miss Wenckebach’s Student Days.

(Continued.)

grounds, the corridors, the lecture rooms where lectures were the scene of constant eager talk, almost always on the subject of their work. The five girls gathered each other, and often as leader, as drill-master, stood the commanding little figure with serious face and quiet, strong voice, a born teacher. Professors and students alike admired the unselsh, energetic, gifted girl. In the class room she took high rank. When she was graduated at the age of nineteen she passed the examinations of the Prussian government with honor. The Director of the College delighted in her work. Her essays, in subject matter, in expression, even in handwriting, he praised as the worthy work of “Cato, the noble Roman,” as he delighted to call her.

Student life in Hanover gave much opportunity to see what was best upon the stage, but such amusement involved no dissipation. Students went together quietly and simply, and so early was the performance that nine o’clock often found the girls at home again at their supper after seeing a classic drama or one of the best of operas. “I heard of theater and opera nights,” her friend says, “but I never associated our Cato with amusements. When, however, at the end I declared that I was too tired to attend the final merrymaking of the students after graduation, ‘Have you ever heard Cato whistle to piano accompaniment?’ No! Then you must!” was the usual argument used to overcome my decision. And Cato’s whistling was as noteworthy as her essays.”

After that night the friends separated, not to meet again until years afterwards in New York when the German girl had become the Miss Wenckebach that Wellesley knows, changed in some subtle way, her friend thought, “the seriousness all pervaded by a new and captivating humor, and, while there was no abatement of that intellectual energy, one felt in the look and in the voice she was glad to be a woman and to work for women in America, she had found her place and was happy in it.”

Prof. von Mach has spoken the wonder that many felt that a German woman in her day and would have been able to work to the field of Scholarship. The universities of Germany were not then open to women and there were no women’s colleges with carefully selected students. Now, but universities. Not universities, but colleges. Not just there were giving to these wise women, who hoped to be teachers themselves, a fine and thorough training, but not in all the subject. In America college offers to its students, but in some that are of the highest value. The classes were entirely neglected, and mathematics and science very inadequately treated, but there were excellent courses in literature, German, French and English, and in grammar and composition in those languages; wide and comprehensive work was demanded in History, and it need hardly be said that the work in Pedagogy and Methods of Teaching was inspiring and interesting. The lectures on these subjects were supplemented by opportunity to observe instructors at their work in all grades, from the beginners, the A-B-C-Durians thru the High School department, the Ausbildungs Anstalt, having its home in the Höhere Töchter Schule. The departments which particularly appealed to FrL Wenckebach were the lower classes, the High School French course, and the German grammar, composition and reading courses of the middle grades, which were under the supervision of the Seminar instructor in Methodik. To her enthusiasm caught from this work the existence of the pedagogical department in our own college is a witness.

Prof. Wenckebach’s achievements were her own, the result of her individual endowments, wide reading, deep thought. But one who knew her as her American friend must feel that for them both the foundations were somehow laid deep, and must pause and ponder, if she be a college woman, whether out of her better advantages she has gained the same power of concentration and of sustained work.

Eliza H. Kendricks.
CARLA WENCKEBACH'S HOME.

Fancy low-lying, seagirt lands, and over them, as far as the eye can reach, grouped little Hollandish villages of red-tiled houses and an oddly-shaped church spire, looking like an exaggerated candlestick, rising from each village; then, at the end, as if stretching protecting arms over each hamlet, a great windmill.

In a village like this, I was received as the guest of Professor Wenckebach.

Then fancy, a little apart from the village, a large, brick house, half barn and half farmhouse, surrounded by a marvelous garden, in which beds of roses and paeonies nodded sociably to beds of marjoram and thyme and early vegetables, and an arbor invited to tea, and a long philosopher’s walk, shaded by cypresses, allowed to contemplation. On the roof of the house was a fine stock’s nest.

“You are just in time to see four little beasties learn to fly!” cried Franklin Caria, as she welcomed me under this East Friesland roof.

Within the house, I especially recall two large rooms, separated by a stone flagged hall. The one was the dining-room, tapestried in crimson and hung with large engravings representing great scenes from the Iliad, the parting of Hector and Andromache, Achilles sulking in his tent and the burning of Ilium. The other side of the hall the quaint Dutch parlor, with historic furniture and odd bric-a-brac, was an unfailing center of social delight.

Where did Franklin Caria get that love of justice, that democratic uprightness of soul? One day she came to me bearing an enormous Noah’s ark, in which were a hundred and fifty animals in every state of decrepitude.

“Aus der Kindheit!” she said merrily, and handed me a little book, on which was printed in cramped, childish hand, “Laws to Govern the Animals in the Ark.”

I read them and answered laughingly,

“Do wonder you came to America, Franklin Caria, for these are the laws of the Republic.”

Where did she get that fine, historic fancy? Another happy day she took me to an old tower, with a look out toward the sea, and we climbed together the stairs to look through the hole wherein the fabled sea pirate watched for his prey in times long gone.

Another day we spent all the sunny hours rumbling about a ruined castle, with its dry moat and broken drawbridge, its dungeon keep and deserted banquetting-hall.

Still another to the island of Nordeney, where Hanoverian kings anciently held their court, the palace walls washed by the Northern Sea.

Where did she get her pride of ancestry, that fine noblesse oblige which made her treat with equal graciousness the lowly or the highborn, the servant or the titled?

It was Sunday afternoon when her father came in, his arms full of yellow parchments, one ornamented with a curious ancestral tree, whose roots sprang from ancient German nobility. Others were diplomas and degrees won by the family from the German universities, and one was the oddly-illustrated title-deed of the beautiful home where I was entertained.

One day, as she talked with her brother, then a young advocate from Cologne, they were recalling, among other reminiscences of their childhood, the noble tragedy that they wrote together, when both were under twelve years of age; the remarkable denouement and the difficulty they had in adapting it to stage purposes.

I turned to Frau Wenckebach and inquired.

“Did Franklin Caria do her sewing and knitting like any good German maiden?”

“That did she not!” was the instant reply. “She never knew where her knitting was, and when it was found the stitches were dropped.”

The bright, wholesome childhood had its outcome in the faithful, useful life. In whatever sphere her freed soul to-day is living, let us believe that she does, as we, suffer God’s will.

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In addition to the tributes which were paid to the life of Friedlein Wenckebach in the speeches made at the memorial service, come others, sent by those who have known her, and whose gratitude to her has found warm and involuntary expression.

"You do not need to be told that all who have known and loved Wellesley will feel that a part of it has gone with Professor Wenckebach's death."

"When I was in College we all used to think of her and her classes an inspiration; and every one of us has had the privilege of seeing her since our student days, realizes what great-hearted womanliness and lively sympathy characterized her in addition to her scholarly. So many of the Alumne remember her with affection that her death will mean a personal loss, widespread and deeply felt."

"Those of us who knew Friedlein Wenckebach even a little, loved her as our professor and personally."

"It was not my good fortune to know Friedlein Wenckebach, but I have always felt a warm affection for her, for, with all the College, I have shared in the good cheer and inspiration of her presence. I find it hard to realize that I cannot hope now to meet her in the halls or to win a 'good morning' from her, but I am stronger and happier because I am privileged to treasure the memory of her unfailing kindliness."

"I feel that we have met with a great loss when one so wise and strong and fearless and true has been called away. Such companionship and friendship as hers is one of the best things life has to offer."

"College will never seem quite the same place without her. I can't bear to think of it, but I'm so glad to have known her a little. Such a great splendid life isn't finished. It is only somehow, somewhere going on to more perfect completion. (That she believed her self, and it is easier for us, too, to believe it at times like this.)"

"We who are away can scarcely realize that Friedlein Wenckebach will not be at College when we come back, and we feel almost as though the loss to the College would be unbearable."

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"We shall all miss her so. She was such a dear teacher and so ready to help one. Perhaps the most natural expression of the girls' feeling toward her was the way we generally spoke of her, 'dear little Fräulein Wenckebach.' College and German will miss her so much."

"So strong of thought, so sound and sweet of heart she was,—so sturdy and steadfast, and full of life. While we grieve for ourselves we realize too that our Wellesley has met with an irreparable loss. She has done a great work for the College; how sorely her strong fine mind, her splendid enthusiasm, her teaching will be missed!"

"The memorial services in their simplicity were so consistent with the strong character of Professor Wenckebach, that the note of our respect and of our sorrow could not but be concurrent with the grand harmony of her continuous life and influence, here and beyond."

"It was indeed a great shock to hear of Fräulein Wenckebach's death, and I can't get used to it at all. I don't like to think how we shall miss her. Her was such a gallant little figure, and the mere seeing her gave one good courage and made one respect one's calling. It was a pleasure to see her this autumn, she was so evidently suffering, and yet she had such a stout heart and answered so bravely that to listen to her one would suppose her illness was a very trifling matter."

"As I look back to her first years in the College I seem to have been impressed with her simple quiet manner in daily intercourse. Then we began to hear of enthusiasm in her classes called forth by thorough training and love for her work. Her persistent untiring energy made her successful in her undertakings. The amount of mental work she accomplished in these years was truly astonishing. One would hardly realize that she ever slept."

"My College days would not have been much to me without Fräulein Wenckebach. Every morning I looked forward with pleasure to the recitation with her. She always came into class as if she were glad to see us again, and she never left us without having said something to make one think. I have had light on many problems in life from her words. It was she who first gave me faith in myself and encouraged me to take up teaching as a profession. She believed that I had certain strong points that would make a teacher of me, and to-day I am what I am because of her belief in me."

"Dear Fräulein Wenckebach seemed to belong to Wellesley, and it won't ever be the same place without her. I have always valued the memory of the two years when I sat at her table, and learned to know something of the broadmindedness and beauty of character which she always expressed."

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"It was with a sense of personal sorrow that I read to-day of Miss Wenckebach's death, for my remembrance of her kindness to me when I was ill last year is still vivid. Many tributes will be paid her memory by her colleagues in the educational world, those who know what her brilliant talents and wide learning have done for Wellesley as an institution, but the offerings of the girls who have sat under her teaching, though more humble, will be more loving and grateful when they recall the sympathetic encouragement and the inspiring breadth of view she gave them."

"Wellesley is infinitely poorer this new year, but she will not soon lose the memory of her who gave so freely out of her own abundance, and we who knew her can never forget her inspiration in the classroom and the delight of meeting her outside."

"My gratitude to her for what she was to me during my course can never cease, and I can but feel a personal sense of void in her going, almost incapable though I am of realizing that so splendid and active a life has gone out from our Wellesley world, where it seemed true that she was a part of the very foundations, and must stay always. No one can ever tell half of what she has meant to Wellesley girls, and surely she has earned a great reward."

"To us who have gone out from her teaching, it is hard to realize that her inspiring personality can never influence future Wellesley students as it has us. Her principles, her very words are as distinct in my mind as if she were before me to-day."

"Fräulein Wenckebach was wonderful, not only as a teacher, which everyone knows, but as a woman, a great-hearted woman, the side of her that I wish everyone had known, too."

"It is hard to realize in this remote place that dear Fräulein Wenckebach is not there, any more. She did for us more than she ever knew. Think how many many girls and women—many whom she would not know even by name—have received from her inspiration for true and high thinking? She always makes me think of Browning's 'Grammarian's Funeral.' She, too, should lie on some noble height."

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