

## An Incident



Evangeline  
W. Andrews  
(Evangeline W. Andrews)

In the early days of October 1890, my sister Ethel Walker and I – she a Freshman, I a Sophomore – found ourselves, with various other students entering Bryn Mawr College, established at the old Bryn Mawr Hotel waiting to be assigned our college rooms in the new Denbigh Hall, which, unfinished when College opened, gave no promise of being habitable before the Christmas holidays. Meanwhile we unfortunates were tramping back and forth to lectures and laboratories and missing many of the social and student events on the campus.

In the dining room at the same table with my sister and me were Mr. and Mrs. Clemens of Hartford (Mark Twain) and their daughter – Susie (**graduation photo at right**) to them, and to us always Olivia – a frail, attractive, charming young girl. As Mr. and Mrs. Clemens were not willing to leave Olivia alone in a hotel, even though there were chaperons, we had the pleasure of their company for several weeks and found them delightful.



The long tables in the dining room seated I think about a dozen or more people, and our service was that of colored waiters who had been employed by the hotel for their summer and early autumn season. Seated opposite us was a Norwegian woman by the name of Wergeland. She, too, was waiting for a room in the new Denbigh Hall. From the beginning of Bryn Mawr College every department had a Fellow, and Miss Wergeland, as a Fellow in History, had come to study with Professor Charles M. Andrews, then the very young head of the History Department of Bryn Mawr. At that time I did not know Professor Andrews, but later he told me how terrified he was when he saw Miss Wergeland because she was already a distinguished woman with a Ph. D., and evidently older than he. However, she spoke no English, and when Mr. Clemens discovered that she was having difficulty ordering her meals he very quietly removed himself from our group to the other side of the table, introduced himself to her, and speaking German fluently as he did helped her to order her meals. This he did, as far as I can remember, three times a day for at least two weeks. His friendliness and gayety were delightful, and evidently he and Miss Wergeland found much interest to talk about. Later she told Mrs. Clemens how grateful she was to him. “Just like him,” commented Mrs. Clemens.

Finally, Mr. Clemens convinced the College authorities that, much as he would like to spend her Freshman year with Olivia at Bryn Mawr College, he was obliged to get back to work, but he added that he would not leave her in a hotel. So suddenly Olivia was given a room in Radnor Hall and, owing to Mr. Clemens' good offices, the two Walker sisters found themselves happily settled in a suite in Merion Hall, for which they had applied long before and in which I had spent my Freshman year. How we blessed Mr. Clemens!

During these weeks we had come to know Mr. and Mrs. Clemens and Olivia very well and all of us were sorry to part; but they promised to come down to see us during the winter and commended Olivia to our care. At the time it seemed to us very natural that Olivia like ourselves should be coming to college, but later I realized how strong was the tie between her and her father, how much they minded being separated, and also how eager Mrs. Clemens was that Olivia should be happy in a new environment, leading an independent life of her own as a college student among girls her own age, free from the limiting influences of home. She was very emotional, high-strung, temperamental, and of all of us – Mrs. Clemens, too – were afraid she might be homesick at first. But fortunately she had an exquisite soprano voice, was very musical, and liked to sing and act, so having a prima donna among us, we almost immediately decided to give the opera “Iolanthe,” with lovely Olivia for Phyllis. She was a natural for the part, and soon everywhere – in Hall and on the campus, wherever one happened to be – one would hear individuals and groups singing the choruses and practicing their parts for the opera. Olivia was in her element, and all of us were enchanted with our Phyllis.

Mrs. Clemens would come down occasionally for a short stay, I think in order to keep Mr. Clemens from coming, because she told me that he would make anything an excuse, even to bringing Olivia's laundry! To our great joy and as time came near for the production of the opera, Mrs. Clemens was established in the then empty infirmary on the top floor of Merion Hall, where she helped us cut out and fit our innumerable fairy costumes, told us stories of her travels and won our hearts. She was a charming person and all of us adored her. She stayed for the opera, which was very successful; but in those days men were not invited to our student productions, so Mr. Clemens was not with us!

Meanwhile it occurred to us that it would be very interesting to have Mr. Clemens come down and give us one of his Readings in the Chapel. Olivia was delighted with this plan even though, as I remembered afterward, her mother was not particularly enthusiastic about it, for I think she felt the nervous strain would be too great for Olivia. And she was quite right for from the moment he accepted the invitation and the date was set, Olivia became very restless and nervous and it seemed to our committee that it was going to be impossible for her and her father to agree upon a program. Letters were written back and forth and details were discussed. Apparently there were some of his stories—especially the "Ghost Story" – that she did not like and felt were not suitable for what she called "the sophisticated group at Bryn Mawr College." "No," she said, she was "not going to allow him to tell that story!" Finally, the two of them settled upon a program satisfactory to both and the day arrived when he was to come and give his lecture. Olivia asked me if I would go to the station with her to meet him because, she said, he would like to walk from the station to the College, a matter of not more than ten minutes. Of course I was delighted to be asked and to see her father again, for all of us had lost our hearts to him when we were at the Bryn Mawr Hotel together. The moment we met him at the station and had exchanged greetings Olivia clung to his hand saying repeatedly as we walked from the Bryn Mawr Station to the College; "Father, promise me that you will not tell the "Ghost Story!" He laughed and patting her hand said: "I have written you that I would not tell the 'Ghost Story' let's forget about it."

Needless to say, the entire College turned out for his lecture in the late afternoon, and he kept his audience laughing. I was sitting with Olivia on the main aisle about the middle of the room holding her damp hand in mine, while she was shaking like a leaf. I tried to encourage her because everyone was enjoying Mr. Clemens thoroughly, and I hoped his success was reassuring her. There were no printed programs and after each "number" he would walk back and forth on the platform, his fine head thrown back, and when the applause ceased he would announce the next title and continue. Finally he came to the end of the program, and as the room grew darker he walked up and down the platform apparently deliberating – now a familiar and amusing stunt.

Olivia was whispering in my ear: "He's going to tell the 'Ghost Story' – I know he's going to tell the 'Ghost Story.' And he's going to say 'Boo' at the end and make them all jump."

"Now don't worry," I said. "You know he always walks up and down and pretends to be thinking what he is going to say. In any case, the audience adores him!"

His audience was so entirely with him I was not worried. However I must say I got a bit nervous as the time went on and he said nothing, and the audience began to grow a little restless. Whereupon, with no announcement, he began with the "Ghost Story." By this time the room was quite dark, and Olivia quietly fled up the aisle, I following. Once out of the room we crossed the hall to a large classroom, the door of which was open. In she went and flung herself down and with her head on a desk wept aloud! She was heartbroken! There was nothing to do or to say, no comfort that I could give her, except to reiterate that she must know the audience was simply delighted with her father and that the performance was completely successful! The applause was thunderous and people began to pour out of the Chapel. Finally, Mr. Clemens appeared and seeing Olivia in the classroom, he rushed in, and in a moment he had her in his arms trying to comfort her. "But Father, " she moaned, "you promised, you promised!" "Oh my Dear," he wailed, "I tried to think of something else and my mind refused to focus. All I could hear

The above remembrance was given to the Mark Twain Library by Eve Dillingham, granddaughter of the author, Evangeline Walker Andrews.

was your voice saying: 'Please don't tell the Ghost Story, Father -- Promise not to tell the 'Ghost Story' – and I could think of nothing else. Oh, my Dear, my Dear, how could I!"

I closed the big doors quickly and fled leaving them to comfort each other.

E. W. Andrews