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JOHN E. WIGMAN CHAMPION OF MANUAL TRAINING SCHOOL

Son of a German Serf Who Has Fought His Way Up to a High Place as a Citizen of a New Country and a Teacher of Its Youth

A LONG low house, built of turf and covered with a roof of thatch, was the birthplace of the man who is now head of the manual training department of the Omaha High school. Living in the long low house were some thirty German serfs, to say nothing of a number of cattle in one end, fifty chickens, a few sheep and some pigeons. The house was one of a dozen which formed the village of Osschenbruck, near Beim, province of Hanover, Germany.

John E. Wigman was the only son of his parents, though they had a small army of other sons and daughters. This is no paradox. His mother was a widow at the time she married his father, and his father was a widower. She had about ten children and his father had as many. John was the only child of both. His mother could speak of "her" children; his father could point proudly to "his" children, but the two could look only upon John and speak of "their" child. The date of John's birth was October 19, 1838.

Life in the village was a life of toil. The serfs were virtually slaves and had to toil without pay a certain number of days each month for their lord. They lived in poverty and in some ways had no better treatment than the beasts. The thatched house in which the Wigmans and their numerous progeny lived was shared by them with another family. In the center of the house was a huge fireplace in which turf was burned in winter. This fireplace also marked the division between the apartments of the two families. There was a threshing floor in one end of the cottage. In the other end were stalls for the cattle and above these stalls a loft in which the small grain which was raised on the few acres with infinite labor was stored. In the winter it was threshed with flails on the threshing floor, every grain being jealously garnered. Another piece of important furniture was the weaving machine on which the women wove the rough cloth for clothing. It was a very beehive of industry, that little humble cot. When the crying of children, the lowing of cattle, the cooing of pigeons, the bleating of sheep, the cackling of chickens, the quacking of ducks and the hissing of geese were mingled as they oftimes were within the confines of the house there truly was, in modern phrase, "something doing."

Twice a month bread was baked in the big oven which stood outside the house, sufficient "pumpernickle" being made to last the big family a fortnight. All the butter which was yielded from the cream of the cows was sold, this being too expensive a luxury for the family to eat. Once a week John's mother put on her best homespun dress and her heavy wooden shoes, bound her big basket over her sturdy shoulders and carried the vendible produce to Beim, where she sold it, bringing the money home to add to the small savings needed to meet government taxes and the like fixed charges.

Orphaned and an Emigrant

At 50 a man was old under this grinding life and at the age of 52 John's father withdrew his neck from the yoke and was buried in the little church yard. John was 3 years of age then, a fatherless boy, son of a serf, with not a brother or sister, though he had something "just as good" in his many stepbrothers and stepsisters.

Letters had come from a sister of Mrs. Wigman who was in America. She told as wonderful a tale of America as the two Jewish spies told of the land of Canaan. Thereafter it was the desire of the dwellers in the little thatched cottage to leave their dull life, to cross the ocean, to possess this land of the free. When John was 7 years old the hegira was started from the little cottage in the village of Osschenbruck to the United States. It was done on the installment plan of easy payments, "so much down and so much a month." The aunt in America sent the first money to bring over the first installment, and a small contingent left the crowded cottage. This included the mother and the youngest son, John being then young enough to travel for nothing. Sailing from Bremen on a sailing vessel they landed in New York after seven weeks tossing and buffeting upon the deep.

They took up their residence in the family of the woman who had staked them to their passage money, and John went to school. It was a long jump from the little grinding community where work was the order of all the waking hours, to the city where one could sit in school all day; it was no less a big change from the quiet village of Osschenbruck, where the most exciting thing was a marriage, to the great metropolis where there was excitement all the time. John went to public school No. 10, on Douane street between West Broadway and Church street. A five-story marble building stands on the site now, marking the growth of the great city. Continuing in this school until he was 12 years of age, the boy then entered a private school conducted by the Lutheran church, of which his mother was a member. He remained at this private school until he was nearly 15 years of age.

Days of Apprenticeship

Then, in pursuance of German custom, he selected a trade and was bound out as an apprentice. John wanted to become a wood carver. He accordingly entered a shop at the corner of Elm and Canal streets, where all kinds of furniture, piano legs and ornaments were carved by skilled workmen. To the master of this shop John was bound for a four years' apprenticeship. He worked the first six months without wages, during the second six months he drew $2 a week, the second year $3 a week, the third year $4 a week and the fourth year $5 a week. During the early part of the fourth year his employer died and the young man immediately secured a position at $12 a week in the shop of a Frenchman, Monsieur Rau, on Green street. This man did a high class of work and kept a store on Broadway. Twelve dollars a week in New York in that early day was a very large sum, equal possibly to about $30 a week in Omaha today. The salary paid the young German boy is, therefore, a fair indication of the high proficiency he had attained in his profession.

During the second year of Wigman's apprenticeship that broad-minded and far-seeing philanthropist, Peter Cooper, established his great institute in New York City, "to be devoted forever to the union of art and science in their application to the useful purposes of life."

"I was 16 years old at the time and doing a hard ten hours of work in the shop every day," says Mr. Wigman. "But I had heard of this institution, where a poor boy could go to school in the evening and learn practical things which would be useful to him in his trade. Another boy and I went around to look at the place and we were impressed by the possibilities. I enrolled immediately, and to old Peter Cooper, a struggler from poverty like myself, I owe most of what I have attained in life. Enrolling and studying in Cooper Institute were two of the best things I ever did. I often used to see Peter Cooper, his son-in-law, Whitney, and his two daughters when they came to visit the institute."

After working in the shop of Monsieur Rau nine months Wigman took a position as cabinet maker. The cabinet maker "busted up" and then the young man, having saved money, decided to go into business for himself. He took as a partner in the venture Mark Harrigan, an Irishman, and, though this was 1857, the year of the panic, their business prospered, only to be submerged in the universal deluge when the civil war broke out.

Struggles During the War

Laying down the instruments of peace and of the fine arts, he took up the implements of war. For thirty days he went through the manual of arms in a Germany company which was being raised by General DeKalb. On the eve of his enlistment the plea of his aged mother caused him to change his mind. He pawned a gold watch and diamond ring, used the money to send his mother to the home of her sister in Fort Wayne, Ind., and when she was gone he betook himself southward to Washington and then on to Alexandria. There he sought work in vain for two weeks, sleeping in barns and generally happening around to the soldier camps about mess time. Then he secured work in a wholesale and retail grocery. After he had been there one year the firm started him and his cousin in the retail grocery business. A venture of the cousin as an army sutler was disastrous and dealt a deathblow to the small concern.

At the close of the war he went to Fort Wayne, Ind., to see his

JOHN E. WIGMAN.

mother. There he secured work as a pattern maker in the Fort Wayne iron works. He remained a year and a half, during which time he met the young woman who was to become his wife, Miss Kate Leishner. But before a man can worship at the altar of Hymen it is necessary that some of that incense called money be secured. In search of this he pushed on west to Springfield, Ill., where he worked in the Wabash railroad shops.

It was while there that he heard luring news of Omaha, which, being the eastern terminus of the great Union Pacific system, was a busy place for railroad men. He wrote to Isaac Congdon, general master mechanic, and received an answer by return mail saying that if he was a good pattern maker he should come on and go to work at 45 cents an hour, which was 25 per cent more than he was getting in Springfield. He moved on to Omaha at once.

Work was so plentiful that he found employment almost day and night, making the unheard of sum of $150 a month. In six months he saved $700, and in September, 1868, he went back to Fort Wayne and married. He brought his bride west and they lived a week at the St. James hotel, which was an old wooden structure standing on the present site of the Burlington station. Then they secured three rooms at Eleventh and Davenport at a rental of $16 a month. There they began housekeeping.

Record of Activities

For twenty-three years Mr. Wigman was an employe of the Union Pacific shops. From 1868 to 1887 he was a pattern maker, and in the latter year he was made foreman of the pattern shops, a position which he held until he left the shops in 1891. In that year he was appointed to be head of the manual training department of the high school.

While he was in the shops he was active in shop affairs. He was a leader in organizing the Durant engine and hose company and wrote its constitution and bylaws. On May 10, 1869, the day when the last spike in the Union Pacific road was driven in Ogden, this fire company appeared in the parade through the streets of Omaha, rivaling Solomon in all his glory in the brilliancy of their uniforms and helmets which had been furnished by the Union Pacific. "Bill" Fawcett was chief at that time and John E. Wigman was assistant chief.

Manual training is the modern system of education, and John E. Wigman is its prophet.

The words "manual training" are the open sesame to his speech. It is his hobby. Next to his family, no doubt, he loves it best of earthly things. The ideas of Peter Cooper when he established his institute in New York City in 1854 should be carried out in all the schools of the country, says Mr. Wigman. And he is doing his best to carry them out here.

He has developed manual training in the high school from a small department with only two small rooms and a total of forty pupils to one of the largest and most important departments of the school, occupying five rooms and enrolling this year 288 pupils.

"And there are no schools in the country that turn out finer work in manual training than the Omaha High school," he says proudly. "We had exhibits at the manual training teachers' convention in New Haven, at the Transmississippi exposition, at the Greater America exposition and at the St. Louis exposition. Everywhere Omaha stood at the head of the column, though in many cities much more money is devoted to this branch than here.

His Great Ambition

"My ambition is to see a building erected in Omaha exclusively for manual training, thoroughly equipped for that purpose with a carpenter shop, pattern shop, blacksmith shop, machine shop and a domestic science and sewing department. Out of the $500,000 appropriated for building schools in this city a sum ought certainly be set aside for the building of this most important department."

Who is this 70-year-old man who talks about ambition and speaks of his high hopes for the future when he has already arrived at the three score years and ten of man's mundane span? To look at the little man with the firm step and the ruddy face one would not take him to be more than fifty years of age. He has original ideas upon the art of keeping young. He has been a gymnast all his life and a devotee of outdoor life. To this he ascribes in part his great vigor. But there is something more important.

"The new system of longevity," he declares, "involves interest in things going on about you, keeping up with the times or a little ahead of them, taking an interest in the affairs, the hopes and ambitions of the rising generation. That's what kept old Pete Cooper alive and active up to his ninety-second year."

Into the minds of the boys whom he teaches he drills the rugged self-reliance of his own life with many an epigram and sentence sermon. "The boy that is able and willing to go to work in overalls and black shirt will soon be wearing a picadilly collar and a boiled shirt and bossing the men under him." And he points proudly to the many boys who have gone out from his department and today occupy high position in the busy world.

Mr. Wigman is a member of the Lutheran church and of the Elks' lodge. He lives with his wife at 3827 North Twenty-first street. They have four children, William Wigman, who holds a responsible position with the United States Supply company; Mrs. Kate Noyes of Omaha, Miss Linda May Wigman of Omaha and Mrs. Emma Rodman of Butte, Mont.

How American Institutions Impress Cardinal Logue

NEW YORK, June 6.—"A little talk with Cardinal Logue?"

Father Quinn, one of the young priests who have accompanied the cardinal on his visit to America, hesitates at the request. He is quite certain that it cannot be accorded and speaks of the great mass of correspondence, the many social visits and half a dozen impending engagements for the day, as reasons why it is plainly impossible even to get a word with him.

But you can see at the start that Father Quinn is undoubtedly on your side. He does not need to tell you, as he does, that he likes everything in New York from the Battery to The Bronx and the trips outside Manhattan have only cemented the stronger his feeling toward the new world. Geniality is radiantly visible in his look, his enthusiastic descriptions and even in his regrets concerning your mission. It is a long step forward for the conservatism of the old world to look leniently on the feminine representatives of the Fourth Estate, but he even does that as if it was all part of this great new scheme of life with which he is becoming rapidly acquainted.

"There was one," he explains, in speaking of this rare species, "who got three minutes with the cardinal. She had three questions written on a slip of paper and he gave her a minute for each. Now, if three minutes would do you any good, perhaps—"

"Three seconds," you hasten to say, for it is the first step that counts.

He has your visiting card and he gazes at the name absently. Then in a second a smile of home sickness and delight irradiates his face.

"Sort o' Irish, ain't it?" he says with a merry twinkle in his brogue.

"Sort o'," you answer sedately. You are sure now that you will see the cardinal, and you sink into the big chair as he disappears through the reception room door.

The episcopal residence at 452 Madison avenue, where Cardinal Logue stopped during his visit, is a very peaceful place for the worldly to rest in. At the door quiet voiced servitors meet the constant stream of callers. Occasionally a secular priest goes by. A cathedral clock chimes softly now and then. Your glance is attracted by the marble bust of a pope rising from its onyx pedestal, a canvas depicting the Madonna and a great vase of spreading ferns.

You are almost asleep, it is so restful, when a slight sound rouses you and you rise, mechanically, as one rises in church at a signal, at the entrance of the cardinal, Michael Logue, archbishop of Armagh, born at Raphoe October 1, 1840, and created cardinal January 16, 1893.

The cardinal has come, genially and kindly, at your request. He is not the imposing figure you had imagined, but there is about him the unmistakable air of one in authority. He is unaccompanied, for even Father Quinn has disappeared, and you have a moment's fear, dispelled at once by his hospitable handshake and his "Sit down, my child."

He follows his handshake by sinking into a great, big, red chair near at hand which engulfs his short figure, and in his gestures that seem to speak his gladness at the respite from the other cares of the hour there is an unconscious appeal to your common sense, if not your generosity. He seems to say, silently and eloquently, that he hopes you will not ask impossible questions and expect impossible admissions and impossible verbal fireworks.

His black gown is buttoned in the front from collar to hem with small scarlet buttons which match in color the cap of silk which he lifts occasionally when he wishes to brush his gray hair with a wave of the hand, a favorite gesture. He wears patent leather pumps, with big gold buckles, cut square, and about his ankles loose scarlet silk stockings are plainly visible.

He has a heavy gold chain about his neck supporting a beautiful filigree cross studded with pale amethysts of a color midway between rose and violet, and a ring on his left hand has a stone of the same tint. As soon as he is seated he draws a repousse silver snuff box from one pocket and a red silk handkerchief from another and takes snuff constantly during the interview.

The cardinal has deeply-set dark eyes under bushy eyebrows flecked with gray, and they are kept downcast, raised only for a moment now and again, then dropped immediately. His face is of the type which suggests no slightest mixture of foreign blood, the long upper lip a predominant feature. He has a slight brogue and an occasional Irish idiom breaks into his speech which has little to suggest the orator. He seems to the casual study more a man of thought than of words.

But he does like to talk about the new world, the visit to which he has accomplished after many years.

"There was a double reason for my coming," he says, "as Archbishop Farley had not only the claim of the church, but also that of personal friendship of many years' standing, and when he asked me to come to the centenary celebration of the Catholic diocese of New York I felt I must take advantage of the opportunity to see this wonderful country of yours and what the church had accomplished since old St. Peter's, on Barclay street, the first Catholic church here, was built.

"No churchman could fail to be pleased at such a Catholic showing. I can never forget the sight, some features of which were especially memorable—the great procession, with 45,000 men in line, the children's service, where I saw before me more than 6,000 little ones, all reverently attentive."

"And the new music—the Gregorian—you think better adapted to such occasions than the former style?"

"It is the pope's ruling," he admonishes, gently. "Until the boy's voice cracks, which usually happens when he is about 14, personally I think there is nothing so beautiful in the world as that freshness and purity, and the combination of a dozen, fifty or a hundred voices, men's and boys', is undoubtedly the most impressive and religious music of any.

"I have heard since I came here that the change meant the cutting off of a great many singers who depended on the church music more or less for their support. I do not know if that be true. Certainly in Ireland it could not have had that effect, for we have no paid singers. Everything is voluntary, and I have in mind only one church—that in Dublin, which was endowed by a Mr. Martin—where anyone is paid, except, of course, the organist.

"The church services give plenty of opportunity for those who love the church music to join in the singing, and I believe that the regular music should be voluntary for many reasons. One is that familiarizing the young boys with the church atmosphere is a very good thing for them. Oftentimes it happens that a man when he is grown up is kept in the church by the habit that he has acquired as a boy of assisting at the altar or in the choir and by his love for it implanted in his early years.

"It is such a fine foundation for a lad that I wish it were possible to give every one of them in the church some active part in the service. The little lads of respectable parentage at home who are admitted to the choir consider it a great privilege and opportunity, and I understand the same feeling is had here, for which I am very glad. I am sure that this was made evident in the jubilee celebration, whose music I do not believe could be surpassed.

"I came for a week's visit, which I planned would cover the centenary services, and that is all I had in mind, but the days have gone by and are still going and I am here yet. I must get back, for my work is greatly in arrears, although I have only to do with the provinces of Armagh and Ulster, the other three archbishops looking after the rest of Ireland, and the traveling is made easy for me now, as I only go to a distant part to be present at the dedication of a new church or some service of equal importance. I never refuse to do anything that I can, but I find my people very lenient to me as I grow older.

"If I were capable of improvement," says the cardinal modestly, but with a little tightening of the lips which precludes any protest of flattery, "I should go back feeling that not a moment had been lost, for there is so much to see here, so much to think about, so much to learn.

"Your skyscrapers are the one distinctive feature of your architecture that I cannot get used to or admire. They seem to me oppressive, ugly and even dangerous. There is to me, too, a certain spiritual significance in the way they have overpowered and dwarfed the church spire.

"It is a thought on which one might ponder at length. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but the horizon in which the spire with the cross stands forth so nobly leading the thought directly upward is to me very impressive, and very necessary. How often has a tired traveler come to a strange place and met that welcoming sight and felt at home immediately! Here the twin spires of St. Patrick's, the beautiful cross on Old Trinity, are sunk into comparative insignificance, and the same is true of other churches."

The cardinal is lost in thought for a moment, then, with a flash of dry humor, emphasized by the quick raising and lowering of the dark eyes.

"Tell me, do the people who live in the top stories of the skyscrapers have to go in on their hands and knees? It certainly looks so from the street as they are being built. As I have been driven along I have pictured them to myself lying flat on the floors and crawling through the doors. The stories look like little boxes put one on top of another.

"Oh, it is merely a matter of height? I am glad to hear that," and he breathes a sigh of relief.

"Of course I know all the reasons for the skyscraper's existence, and they are good ones from the commercial standpoint. I had a long talk with a man from Albany who furnishes a great deal of the stone that is used for them in this part of the country and he was quite convincing in his arguments.

"But what he said and what I observe myself

(Continued on Page Three.)