

The Link

Memorial Number



December, 1933

THE LINK

MISS FINE'S SCHOOL



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In Memoriam
May Margaret Fine
June 18, 1869
November 14, 1933



From the Portrait by Ibsen, 1932

December 7, 1933

TO THE EDITORS OF THE LINK :

It is an honor to be permitted, in the name of the Trustees, to express their appreciation of the irreparable loss which has been sustained by the School in the death of Miss Fine. While she has ever been supported by a corps of efficient and faithful teachers, the School in largest measure has been her own creation, and remains as a monument to her ability and devotion. Her rare gifts, her unresting service, her unsparing self-sacrifice, her courage and cheerfulness and Christian faith combined in a character of notable beauty and strength. The influence of her radiant personality is abiding in lives molded by her ministries and inspired by her memory.

CHARLES R. ERDMAN
President



PRAYER OF DEAN WICKS AT MISS FINE'S
FUNERAL SERVICE, NOVEMBER 16, 1933

O THOU who art the author of life, to whom our spirits return, grant that grief may serve to brighten all our remembrance of her who lived in this center of learning as one who passed on a torch; who dwelt ever in the thought that others had labored and she had entered into their labors to set mind after mind afire and spread light in a world of darkness. We are grateful for one who had the gift to stir a listless life, kindle self-confidence, and start thoughtless youth on that ascending road along which life's higher meanings lie; who with zeal that could be shared, shed influence where she knew it not and made many want what lay beyond their knowing. We praise thee for a rare spirit in whom duty was love and love was life; who so lived that in their thought of her others felt most ashamed of their unworthiness and became aware of love which overlooked a fault to believe the best, and which followed them through the years with devotion that knew not how to forget. We hold ourselves in lasting debt to thee who dost make possible this kind of life with power to make significant the commonplace routine, to hold the loyalty of those who share the daily round of work, and keep the zest of life unto the last, through that unselfishness which is given unto those whose life is hid with Christ in God.

MAY MARGARET FINE

"Her children arise up and call her blessed."

WHEN, in 1897 for the first time, a group of Princeton girls decided that they wanted to go to college, there was no school in the town where they could get the necessary preparation. They turned therefore to Miss Fine, who was not long out of Wellesley and who, after teaching in a Germantown school and doing some tutoring, was without definite plans at the moment. She taught these girls at the house of two of her pupils and, the second year, taught other girls in a new school. That second year a group of parents asked Miss Fine to start a school of her own, and so in 1899 Miss Fine's School was founded in a small house on Mercer Street. Here Miss Fine taught all the upper school subjects herself, excepting only the French and German, which were taught by the Woodrow Wilsons' governess. A little later she drew on the University faculty for final courses in English and French and German. From the beginning there were additional teachers for the lower school, which numbered twenty-nine in its first year. Miss Fine tended the furnace herself.

The school grew so steadily that in less than ten years it needed larger quarters and moved from Mercer to Stockton Street. In 1918 the need of room led to the purchase of the former Princeton Inn, and it was at this time that the school was incorporated.

Miss Fine had never taken more than a small salary for herself, putting back into the school every possible penny, and adding now a teacher, now improvements to the building or playgrounds.

The high quality of Miss Fine's work is a matter of the records. From the first her girls have made excellent grades both in their entrance examinations and in their college years. Several times the Regional Scholarships were taken by her girls in Bryn Mawr.

Success with able students is not rare. It was with girls who were not fitted to win academic honors that Miss Fine did what was perhaps her most remarkable work, for she cared

very much for the scholastic standing of her school. Such girls were not allowed to feel inferior. To them she gave special care, seeing to it that the school gave them all it could by way of stimulus and encouragement and, what is more unusual, finding a way to use the particular gift of leadership, or character, or personality each might have to contribute.

Such a history implies a person of rare power and character, and no one in Miss Fine's position at the head of a large school could fail to be intimately connected with most of the families of the town, and of all the nearby towns from which her pupils came. But Miss Fine was much more than a person of unusual ability, and her relations with her pupils and their families much more than unusually friendly. Her passionate integrity and sense of justice set a magnificent standard, but they were completed by a deep and generous sympathy. No one has ever more truly loved the sinner while hating the sin. Her eager interest followed her girls into all the ways of their lives, not only while they were with her, but always. She knew and cared about what happened to them and to their families. She remembered every joy and every grief, and all the little facts that go to make a family history.

Miss Fine had gone to school in Princeton herself, and had inherited friendships with both town and gown, besides all the many friends she made for herself. She had a lively interest with all that had to do with her town or her country, and could be counted on to help with any cause that might be of use.

Miss Fine had vigorous health, and when she was ill last spring no one could think of her illness as mortal. She went to Maine as she had done for many summers past, expecting to get entirely well. But the trouble, which proved to be phlebitis, returned, and in August she was forced to take to her bed permanently. In September she was moved to the Princeton Hospital, and still it was expected that she would recover. She died on the afternoon of Tuesday, November the fourteenth. By her own wish the school was closed for only one day, the day of her funeral, which was held at the school. Her loss is a desolating one, but Princeton is the richer for her life.

A TRIBUTE BY DEAN ANDREW F. WEST

Miss Fine is one of the very few who have done most to make Princeton a better and happier place to live in. Her wise methods, persevering efforts, competent scholarship, skilful teaching, unselfish devotion and deep spirituality combined to give her a quiet, pervasive and elevating influence over the minds and hearts of all. By her death Princeton is much poorer as by her example it is much richer in the better things of human life.

MISS FINE

To all of us who have been in this school, whether for twelve years or only one, the passing of Miss Fine comes as a great shock and a still greater loss. She was to us a kind teacher, a good friend, and a second mother to watch over and guide us. No problem was too small to take to her, no moment so busy that she could not give us advice and help. We were all her daughters whom she loved and in whose interests she spent every day in the year.

We will always carry the picture of her life and its accomplishment in our hearts and minds as a high ideal. Few of us will ever be so esteemed, so honored, and so loved; but when we have gone out into the world and have our chance to live a life, not so good as hers, but as nearly like it as we can make it, her spirit will stay with us as a guide.

A MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF 1934

MISS FINE

The name which she inherited
Was in her keeping merited :
Fine was the gold of her exchange
With those she taught in every range
Of her great soul. So was the school
Under her wise and gentle rule
A place where happy children grew
Into her spirit's likeness too.

JOHN H. FINLEY

REMINISCENCES OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SCHOOL

IN THE late 'nineties there was no "Miss Fine's School" in Princeton; nor were there many girls who were preparing to go to college. There was, however, a small group of girls who were being taught privately by Miss Fine, and out of that little class there grew the school which now has such a prominent place in the life of Princeton. There were three of us at first (Lucy Macdonald, now Mrs. Herman C. Pitts of Providence, R.I., my sister, Rebekah Purves, now Mrs. W. P. Armstrong, and I) and the class was held at our house, 73 Stockton Street. Later others joined us, and this class continued, Miss Fine teaching all the subjects except modern languages and giving to us all in full measure the inspiration of her enthusiasm for knowledge and a well-trained mind.

It was in 1899 that a group of people in the town came to her and asked her to start a school in order that a larger number of boys and girls might have the benefit of her teaching. She loved the close personal contact which she had with her few pupils in our home, but realized also the possibilities for wider usefulness and therefore agreed to start a school. A committee was formed to act in an advisory capacity, the house on the corner of Mercer and Alexander Streets known as 42 Mercer Street was secured, and in the fall of 1899 Miss Fine's School opened with an enrollment of 41.

Following is a copy of Miss Fine's first announcement:

The Princeton School for girls and young boys will open Monday morning, October the second, at nine o'clock. The residence at the eastern corner of Mercer and Alexander Streets has been secured for the sessions of the school.

For terms and other information application should be made to Miss Fine, Princeton, New Jersey.

The Advisory Committee of the school is composed of the following gentlemen:

PROFESSOR A. F. WEST, Chairman

MR. GEORGE ALLISON ARMOUR

REV. DR. PURVES

PROFESSOR J. G. HIBBEN

PROFESSOR J. MARK BALDWIN

MR. WILLIAM M. NORRIS

Princeton, July, 1899



MISS FINE AND A GROUP OF HER OLDER GIRLS, SPRING OF 1900

How vividly those of us who were there can remember those first years of the school when Miss Fine was both principal and teacher and more than that a close friend of every pupil. She had other teachers to help with the English, history, and modern languages, and there was a Primary department with its own teacher, but Miss Fine herself taught the classics and mathematics which then formed the most important subjects in the curriculum. Sometimes she taught two classes at once, once in a while even three, going from one group to another in turn and never losing her hold on what each class was doing. The older girls were gathered in a small room and were comparatively few in number, as the picture of Miss Fine seated among them shows; some were preparing for college, others were not, so it was a mixed group with varying types of interest. To each one, however, Miss Fine gave her whole attention, and in every one of us there was the firm conviction, and rightly so, that our particular problems and our future careers were Miss Fine's chief concern. It was an intimate family group bound by ties of love and loyalty to Miss Fine. On her part there was an unflinching interest in the life of each one of us, which interest followed us as we passed out from the school and was ours as long as she lived.

The first year, one pupil left to go to college. There were no formal graduations in those days, and no diplomas. We merely left with the knowledge that we had completed the course and were sent on our way well prepared to enter college or to begin whatever career life held out for us. The pupils of those first years have scattered far; not many still live in Princeton, but wherever they have gone, and in the lives they are living, they have carried with them the influence which Miss Fine exerted upon them and which has helped to keep them true to the high standards she set before them.

As the school grew the number of these pupils increased until today there are almost a thousand alumnae and former pupils of Miss Fine's School, all of whom are conscious of the same influence in their lives and each of whom would bear witness to the deep personal interest which Miss Fine manifested in her contacts with them both as teacher and friend. In her death each one of us has sustained a deep personal loss, and to all of us the memory of her loving sympathy, her unflinching loyalty, her fairness, and her faithfulness to the high ideals of conduct and the high standards of scholar-

ship which she set before her pupils will remain one of the abiding forces in our lives. From the oldest to the youngest, from near and far, her former pupils bear testimony to their love for her and to their deep appreciation of all that she has done for them. With the unflinching faith which was hers and with some of her courage and enthusiasm, may we go forward, living as nobly in our generation as she lived in hers.

ELINOR KENNEDY PURVES

A LETTER

(The letter from an old pupil which is here given in part was written and received at the school after Miss Fine's death.)

London

MY DEAR MISS FINE:

23. xi. '33

Almost twenty years have gone by since I left your care, and I have hardly seen you in all that time. Twenty years, and I have never made an occasion to express to you the gratitude which I have felt constantly and often expressed to others for some very fundamental assets which I owe you.

I will not speak of the intangible benefits which I derived from being one of your pupils. I will say of your patience and kindness only that I am grateful for them, and shall always be so. . . .

I have been a student ever since I knew you, and have known many teachers, but I have never had any instruction to compare with yours for durability and thoroughness and stimulation. I cannot let more time go by without telling you so.

My little Latin was of such a nature that it has opened at various times the doors of almost every Romance language for me; it has been no less serviceable to my English. . . . I have always attributed the ease with which I have been able to find my way about in these things to the intelligent, enquiring, lively introduction to the Latin mind which I received from you. You number many far better classicists among your old pupils, but I should be surprised to learn that any of them had had more practical, direct benefit from your inspired teaching than this blundering scholar.

I have been in Princeton only two or three times in many years, and on each occasion I have called upon you without success. Lest more years go by and you remain unaware of my appreciation, I have tried to put it into words. Horace could have done so—I cannot, but perhaps you will receive my effort kindly.

VIRGIL'S ÆNEID, BOOK I

(lines 157-169)

A translation made in memory of Miss Fine's love for the Æneid by a member of the Class of 1934.

Now well exhausted from that storm at sea,
Æneas with his Trojans strains to land
Upon the strange and desolate Libyan strand.
The hero's ship plows through the frothy deep
Full by an island, where the mighty sea
Ruffles its brim and slaps incessantly.
All seven warships sail past raging surfi
To limp into a placid shimmering bay,
Whose glassy surface reflects night and day
That mighty image of twin headlands green.
See! Regal mountains tower to the sky.
Silent, they guard the Trojans passing by.
Then to the nigh-dead leader is displayed
A forest's cooling green and bristling shade.
Here jagged rock juts out above the foam
To form a sheltering cave—the Oreads' home.
Within, a laughing spring so crystal pure
Gurgles its way 'round rocks of living stone.
Without, rest peacefully these ships of Troy—
Survivors of the tempest's rough rebuke—
Upon the bay. No mooring's here nor anchor fluke.



MISS FINE WHILE A STUDENT AT
WELLESLEY, MARCH 13, 1888



FROM A PICTURE OF THE CLASS OF
WELLESLEY 1889, TAKEN ON
"TREE DAY" 1888

THE FINES IN PRINCETON

IT IS a privilege to write something in appreciation of Miss Fine's work and her great service to Princeton and to us all.

She was one of a very remarkable family. It is rare that three members of one generation should devote themselves to work in the same field, and all achieve notable success; and still rarer that all three should do so in one small town.

It is impossible for the writer, whose relations with this work of education have been intimate for more than forty years, to adopt an impersonal manner in speaking of it; the personal touch may well be pardoned under the circumstances.

I remember talk in my mother's family many years ago of how the elder Mrs. Fine, Miss Fine's mother, was left a widow with small resources, and how she courageously spent most of her small capital in assuring her children's education. When was there a better-advised or sounder investment? Half a century later, and for many years still to come, Princeton—the town and the University alike—remembers and will remember with gratitude that wise decision.

My own connection with the Fines began forty-four years ago—when Benjamin Harrison was president—as a little lad at the Princeton Preparatory School. I still remember the sound sense and kindly judgment of the Headmaster, and the goodness of the teaching. Mr. John Fine—an admirable teacher himself—knew how to pick competent young men to aid him. One of my former teachers has been for many years a colleague on the Princeton Faculty, and another, after a distinguished private and public career, is head of a department at Yale.

Forty years after I entered the school, my son left it to enter Princeton—after two years under the same Headmaster—having found the same sound teaching, and a wise personal guidance that enabled him to save a year's preparation.

Early in my college life, I had the great privilege of coming into Dean Fine's classes. Here was a great teacher—just, lucid, and full of enthusiasm for his beloved mathematics. It is not everyone who would habitually remain fifteen or twenty

minutes after the close of a class at six o'clock (we had such things then!) answering his students' questions or expounding some interesting point—and have almost all of the half-dozen who had elected his courses remain with him! To this love of sound learning I owe much; but I owe still more—more indeed than I can tell—to the wise and judicious counsel which Dean Fine unfailingly put at my service. For four-and-twenty years he was my best adviser and my wisest friend, and I owe him more, for help and guidance, than to any other man.

A score of my colleagues on the Faculty could doubtless bear the same witness; for Princeton's distinguished place in science is primarily the result of his sound judgment and indefatigable energy in selecting and keeping able men. From the beginning of the new era under President Wilson to the consummation of the great research endowment, shortly before his lamented death, his influence was paramount, to the University's great gain.

Miss Fine's School began too late for me to be an alumnus; but my cousins and near neighbors went there from the earliest days of the house at the corner of Mercer and Alexander Streets and a building which stood in what is now Trinity churchyard, and one or more of my own children were there continuously for fifteen years (barring a year abroad). In talking with professional colleagues of other universities of life in Princeton, I have always spoken of the excellent schools as a major advantage of the place; and of course Miss Fine's was first in my mind and on my tongue. Fortunate indeed are the parents who have so good an opportunity for their children. What the School's work has been, from the intellectual side, is known to all—best, perhaps, to the Deans of Admission, or similar officers of other name, in women's colleges.

A greater triumph was the School's spirit and morale. To introduce the honor system—in fact, as well as in name—and maintain it for years among children of grammar-school age, as well as in the later years, is a rare achievement—but it was typical of the School. The environment helped—so did the loyal cooperation of the teachers—but the central figure in this, as in all the life of the School, was Miss Fine. Into the School she had put a life's work, building it up from a house full of little folks into one of the most notable schools of the state, maintaining the level of its Faculty on as high

a plane—*mutatis mutandis*—as her brother did in the University, and despite increasing numbers preserving that personal touch in relations with parents and pupils alike which means so much.

How many of us have memories of her little talks at the School Commencements—informal, a bit rambling at times, but the more effective because of the absence of any "set-piece" quality. She took us all, children, parents, and friends, into her confidence and told us as members of one family how things had gone and how they were going. No wonder the spirit was good!

She was a teacher, too—both in the mathematics which was dominant in her family and in the classics—and found time from her many duties, in later years, to give individual instruction to the one girl in the school who in these altered days desired to study Greek—as that girl's father recalls with gratitude.

* * *

All three are gone at last: their work for Princeton and for the nation closed; but their deeds live after them. The Preparatory School carries on under a Fine of the new generation; the University has been permanently strengthened and enriched by Dean Fine's work; and Miss Fine's School will perpetuate not only her name, but her spirit, for academic generations yet to come.

Her many friends are left to mourn their personal loss—but of that one may be forgiven if one says no more.

HENRY NORRIS RUSSELL

Pasadena, December 1, 1933

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HAS BEEN PUBLISHED FOR DISTRIBUTION AMONG
THE PUPILS OF THE SCHOOL AND OTHER
FRIENDS OF MISS FINE





