

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, AS HIS NEIGHBORS SEE HIM



Mrs. William J. Bryan



"Fairview," the Bryan Home near Lincoln, Nebraska.



Mrs. Ruth Bryan Leavitt, the eldest daughter

The Man of World-Wide Fame As He Appears At Home

Now, if you were about 50 years old and hailed from Jacksonville, Ill., you'd walk right in and grab him by the hand and announce:

"Bill, I've come all this way to Nebraska to say we'll make a President of you." And William J. Bryan would grip yours with a grip trained to the bone-breaking greetings of horny-fisted campaigns, while he answered:

"Why, Jim, you old Illinois friend, come on down to dinner!"

And you could go back home afterward wondering how Bill Bryan, who was one of the kids way behind you older boys at school, ever could have come to be a "foremost American," a rich man and a candidate for President of the United States. Why, you hadn't more than shaken hands with him before you saw he was the same old Bill, just as you are the same old Jim, for all his foreign curios and high-grade farm stock.

Well, we can't all come from Jacksonville, Ill., where Mr. Bryan went to school. And the rest of us can't all come from Salem, where he was born; or even from Lincoln, in Nebraska, where he is now regarded as "a leading citizen."

And yet, wherever you came from, if you were to go to the Bryan farm, near Lincoln, merely to "pay your respects," the greeting you would receive would be of the same type, and the impression of the simple, homely man would be no different from that renewed in his old associates. He would rise up in your eyes, as in theirs, as Bryan, the commoner.

Why not take the trip to Nebraska and see this great commoner, just as he is, today?

One comfort about this way of visiting is that we don't have to be so formal. No society nonsense of sending up a card, and waiting until Mr. Bryan comes in from the fields and slips on a clean collar and a laundered shirt, with attached cuffs, before he greets us welcome.

The Bryan we want to see today is the man who grew up, back there in Illinois, where, for all his father's position as circuit judge, the son judged, and in a basket to school with the rest of the boys, and sneaked bits out of his extra apple when the teacher wasn't looking.

That was the boy who worked, session after session, for the election prize, getting licked at first, but sticking to it until, having captured second place with "Bernardo del Carpio," of grandiloquent memory, he turned round and wrote some of the things he had thought out himself, on "Labor," and landed the first prize.

He was the same boy who grew into the ambitious manhood of 25 years, doing the hardest and most old-fashioned work of all, farming. What has become of the farmer Bryan used to be in the days when he rustled up in the cool summer mornings, with candid gullies placed high on unconspicuous collar bone, to the urgent oratory of rural Illinois?

"Hi, there, Bill! Don't forget the chickens before you hoe the corn."

What has become of him? Why, here he is, a quarter of a century later, still remembering the chickens, with new gullies spread more broadly over shoulders that are padded more comfortably, but with his close-woven, durable farmer's breeches tucked into the cowhides, as of yore.

He leans an affectionate hand upon the door of the up-to-date chicken run, while he gazes fondly through the modern perfection of its wire mesh at the occupants of the inclosure.

"Made that sliding door—invented it—myself," he remarked, with the pride of the farmer who has been born to regard his farm as a congregation does its church—a place to be constantly improved to the limit of his resources and his skill.

As we struggle over with him for a study of the Poland china, we can afford to indulge ourselves in a quiet grin over the normal of a statement absorbed in the raising of registered pigs—until we remember that it took a patriot of the caliber of Cicero to retire to his farm when Rome no longer notably his directing mind.

And we can secretly wonder over his enthusiasm for his herd of handsome polled Jerseys and shorthorns, a Mr. and Mrs. Bryan who live in Fairview, the Bryan home near Lincoln, Neb.—and that was going some in barns, for Carnegie was trying to show New York city what he could do in the way of drawing rooms on Fifth avenue under the friendly auspices of the steel tariff.

When, at last, the house was completed and the happy owner could change his domicile from the stable to Fairview, with its twenty-two rooms, he had the homestead he had been hoping for and working for all his life—the homestead that is the alluring vision which takes so many farm boys cityward when, like him, they find themselves of age, and leaves them, unlike him, stranded there, pining for the rest of their lives.

And that brings us to our formal visit, as presumably respectable if inquisitive strangers, to the Mr. and Mrs. Bryan who live in Fairview, the Bryan home near Lincoln, Neb.—and that was going some in barns, for Carnegie was trying to show New York city what he could do in the way of drawing rooms on Fifth avenue under the friendly auspices of the steel tariff.

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William Jennings Bryan, Jr.



Mrs. Ruth Bryan Leavitt, the eldest daughter



Mrs. Grace Bryan

form to his tastes, instead of the dwelling which supplied simply his needs. The house cost him \$30,000 before he got through, for, like the farm proper and its live stock, it was designed to have every modern convenience, from its own automatic water supply to its own gas plant. And Farmer Bryan did in reality that which, to every other farmer, has thus far been mere hyperbole: he treated his live stock as well as his own family. In plain and general fact, he built the stables first, and built it so well and so commodiously that the ambitious among human beings could be content to live there. Then, promptly, he and his family did live there. The house, unfinished, was no more to be left to contractor and workmen than the cement posts were to be left to hired labor later. The boss was bound to be on the job, as usual.

So, in lieu of other homestead—the original frame dwelling of the place having been already torn down—Farmer Bryan and Mrs. Bryan and the children and the bulldog all moved into the barn.

Farmer Bryan, keeping a weather eye, morning, noon and night, upon the progress of the fine new home, pitched in between times on the work of the thirty acres that made up the farm, and he took the boss' own care, which no hired man's ever equalled—of his four head of horses, his two cows and the hundreds of chickens that constituted the animal population.

As for the pigeons and the bulldog, they belonged to William, Jr., and even his father couldn't have wrested their guardianship from that son of his dad.

Many another family might have been satisfied, like the Bryans, to live, for the time, in the barn designed for the cattle. Built of brick, two stories in height it had been reared more substantially and fitted more solidly than whole suburbs of two-story dwellings now occupied, to their complete ambition, by thousands of people. East and West.

Upstairs there were three sleeping rooms, used by the family, with a fourth to spare for any guest who stayed overnight. Downstairs Mrs. Bryan took possession of the harness room, with the cooking stove and the calm efficiency that is so peculiarly hers—which, of course, transformed the harness room into the kitchen.

The walls dividing the rooms being solid as rock and the fittings being in hardwood, all that was needed to make a modest mansion out of the new barn was the furniture.

Mrs. Bryan saw to that. She took the whole carriage house, or runway, of the barn, and applied a liberal hand in its furnishings—bright rugs on the cement floor, the harness room, with the stables, stands of books and pieces of statuary here and there, and plenty of the big, cozy chairs that make American life really worth living.

His owner and his owner's wife are too busy for those passive blisses.

Everybody gets up at 5 in the morning. Farmer Bryan hustles down to the big desk in the basement office and works as being Editor Bryan, or Author Bryan, or Correspondent Bryan, or more of the Bryan Bryans which his multifarious activities thrust upon him.

Mrs. Bryan, meanwhile, is ordering the affairs of the household, laying out the work of the servants, settling the program of the day as far as the details of the evening meal, and otherwise planning and contriving to escape, with credit, from her housewifely duties in order to give her husband the aid he needs so much and depends on so greatly.

The beautiful domestic life of the late William McKinley, so universally held in reverence for the manner in which a husband's devotion maintained, in spite of the incessant activities of his career, a constant, hourly companionship with his wife, is duplicated in the Bryan family, with this difference.

Mrs. McKinley's illness permitted of little more than her keen sympathy with her husband's affairs; Mrs. Bryan's health and special training make her practically an active partner in all her husband's labors.

She studied law that she might remain upon his intellectual level. She studied the typewriter that she might be his confidential secretary. She supplemented her collegiate training with a lifelong habit of reading that she might be in continuous touch with the literature, the arts, the questions and the affairs of the day.

Here, then, is one key to the mystery of the disposal of Fairview of the 300,000 letters that are addressed to William J. Bryan every year.

But only the flying hours and minutes of her busy day can supply their hints of the resourcefulness she has brought to bear upon the handling of the thousands of letters that are sent to her personally, upon the local, foreign branch for women and upon the varied avenues of stratagem that claim charity's tithe, of one-tenth, annually from her husband's income.

The trust, most intimate, most complete companionship of which the fondest couple has ever dreamed is that of the Bryans, husband and wife.

In play as in work, they are together. Her pleasure is his riding and there is the secret of Farmer Bryan's growing love of good horseflesh. Sometimes he can be seen driving into Lincoln in his regular farm wagon, a farmer of the farmers, as occasion calls. But his carriage turnout is with a spanking team equipped with the silver harness that has been aspired to by every farmer and every woman who ever held the reins.

And his happiest hours are astride General, the thoroughbred charger presented to him by United States Senator W. J. Stone, of Missouri, riding over the Nebraska roads as comrade to his wife.

This does seem to come pretty close to knowing all there is to be known about the private character of the foremost American whom we are discovering for ourselves, after so many years of violent panegyric and equally violent diatribe.

But there have been expert farmers, before the year 1908, who were expert skinflints, as there have been excellent husbands and kind fathers, as there have been capable employers of that sort of a "boss" is Bryan's own word.

We can leave the farm with the comfortable assurance that the farm help is not dropping off to sleep nights half dead with the labor of keeping the blooded stock elegantly alive, as happens on many a so-called model farm, where the beasts are treated better than the humans. Bryan's people at Fairview appear to be chronically content.

But he is a real boss, a boss of the kind we read about, over there in Lincoln, where he publishes the Commoner. Let us drive to Lincoln and do that time-honored act of cruelty, interview the editor.

They're politely sorry at the Commoner office; the editor—the Editor— isn't in.

It's very unfortunate that, when we bade Mr. Bryan good-bye in the oak-fitted library at Fairview, we omitted to tell him to hurry over to Lincoln, so that we might interview him in his capacity as The Editor.

Best we can do now is to interview his employees and learn what they think of him. Some of us being newspaper people ourselves, we know it'll be the same old story: the old man's getting cranky, when he isn't too uptight to speak to anybody, he's always epileptic about expenses; nobody can do a thing to satisfy him; and he never did know the difference between a box of "pi" and an m-dash, anyway.

Is it the same old thing? Not according to the working force of Editor Bryan's Commoner. One begins to find exceptions to the rule of newspaper "kickers" when the circulation has climbed up beyond the 150,000 mark without the aid of sworn affidavits, and when the annual profits are in the neighborhood of \$50,000. A force like that is usually bustling so hard that it hasn't time to spare for either kicks or panegyrics.

There are half a hundred people on the Commoner force, far fewer than would be needed of such a paper, with such a circulation, if Editor Bryan ran his own composing and press rooms. But the setting of the type and the actual printing of the paper are mechanics and things which he has done by contract with some Lincoln firms, so that the number directly in his employ is limited to the restricted editorial staff and the business and circulation departments.

It is true that they see little of him. Politics, lecturing, farming—the countless avocations of his life—leave him more nearly the editor in the abstract of boss who remains most popular.

But when the "Boss" does come to the office, the sobriquet of "commoner," which has attached itself to him, becomes apparent in its full significance.

There is no trace of the boss in his attitude; there is even no trace of that paternal air which is the last remnant of authority usually preserved by the type of boss who remains most popular.

The relations between Editor Bryan and the Commoner's workpeople are those of complete and unaffected equality. Any of them is free to account him, socially or on a business topic, and the talk that follows might be one between a couple of friendly farmers or clerks.

That subtle undercurrent of condescension, or of patronage, or of conscious authority common to all business enterprises elsewhere, is noticeably absent. There is about it neither aristocratic, long-headed policy, nor even any intentional abdication of the forms of authority.

The simple, illuminating fact is that the business is



A Quiet Home Hour



Ready for a Tour of the Farm

organized on a basis which, while it is far from being the altruism hoped for by socialist incompetents, is some far millennium, gives the laborer all, and more, of the hire which is his due, than he ordinarily receives under current conditions.

The wages paid are higher, by 25 per cent, than those of any other publishing house in the city. The regular Lincoln rates for untrained girls is \$3 a week; the Bryan rate is \$4. That relatively high wage scale is maintained right up to the managing editor.

Nobody works more than eight hours a day, with seven hours as the limit for Saturday. There are busy seasons for the Commoner's force, as there are for all other forces, but no employee feels it incumbent to stay for extra time under pain of disfavor.

Additional service is supplied by the volunteers, of whom there are always plenty, perhaps because of a spontaneous loyalty, perhaps because extra time earns a 50 per cent. increase in wages. The regular holidays are all allowed, and two more per year are thrown in for luck and good fellowship.

Ordinary mortals ought to be fairly well satisfied with such a boss' and Lincoln, Neb., is composed of ordinary mortals like the rest of us.

A thoroughly conscientious criticaster might find a trace of paternalism about those two extra holidays. One of them comes in the summer, when Mr. Bryan invites everybody who works for him to a picnic at Fairview. The other comes in winter, when a special entertainment is provided for them at his home or at that of his brother. Thus far, however, nobody in Lincoln has discovered in these two hospitalities anything more objectionable than a good time.

He charters a special trolley car for the trip to Fairview and plays the host as he plays the "boss." Frankly a companion and as frank the farmer. His

If there is any game or contest during the picnic, he is as likely to be in it as the most energetic kid among the boys, and, if during the winter visit half an hour threatened to drag heavily, he is ready with stories about the Jap bronzes at the front door or about the things he saw in Europe that have all the vivid charm of description which the most graphic cinematograph views must lack.

So things go rather happily under Bryan, the "boss," just as they do under Bryan, the farmer. His paternalism is reserved for the walls of the Fairview home, where his oldest daughter, Mrs. Ruth Bryan Leavitt, was allowed to marry her artist when she insisted on having him; where his second daughter, Grace, now 17, is indulged in her studious bent by being given the advantages of a well selected school in Virginia, and where William, Jr., was assigned to the upbuilding regimen and discipline of an Indiana military school.

The summer brings the family most closely together. As his head approaches his half century in all the strength, health and kindly dignity of manhood matured into its prime, the homestead in this new western world, for all its modern external, strangely reproduces the oldest and most perfect ideal ever attained by man—the ideal of the patriarchal life, in the full splendor of the harvest of its years, lived in the calm happiness of the ancient, biblical simplicity, without fear and, before a world at last reverent, without reproach.

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