

# WILLIAM J. BRYAN as his NEIGHBORS SEE HIM



Mrs. William J. Bryan

## 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 so 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 campaigners, 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 gives 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 lugged his lunch basket to school with the rest of the boys, and sneaked bites out of his extra apple when the teacher wasn't looking.

That was the boy who worked, season after season, for the election prize, getting licked at first, but sticking it to until, having captured second place with "Bernardo del Carpio," or grandiloquent memory, he turned to 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 22 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 in the cool summer mornings, with candid galluses liked high on uncompromising collar bone, to the urgent affairs of rural Illinois?

"Oh, there, Bill! Don't forget the chickens before you bow the corn."

What has become of him? Why, here he is, a quarter of a century later, still remembering the chickens, with new galluses 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 trudge over with him for a study of the Poland breed of registered pigs—until we remember that it took a patriot of the caliber of Cincinnati to return to his farm after the anomaly of a statesman absorbed in the raising of hogs—some no longer needed his directing mind.

And we can secretly wonder over his enthusiasm for his herd of handsome polled Jerseys and shorthorns, a score of cows and a couple of duly registered bulls—until we recall the scrupulously kept stock records of Mount Vernon and the heart-whole interest in breeding which Washington's private letters so frequently displayed.

There would have been no room for the doubt if we had been there when the cement posts were going in. This was himself was on the job, helping in the digging of the post-holes for the sheer love of the hard, familiar work. Every acre of this farm of Bryan's has been under the shrewdness of the practical farmer, under the inspiration of the soil-loving nature that was originally born in him. It was so more than thirteen years ago when he put into its first five acres the first modest barn when, from time to time, he added to them the town of Lincoln, and in 1901, he was ready to quit the growing farm at Fairview, four miles away.

He was making real money by that time, and he was



'Fairview,' the Bryan home near Lincoln, Nebraska.



William Jennings Bryan, Jr.



Mrs. Ruth Bryan Leavitt, William's eldest daughter.



Miss Grace Bryan

In a position to live in a real home—one that should conform to his tastes, instead of the dwelling which supplied simply his needs.

The house cost him \$20,000 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 literal fact, he built the stable 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 that 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 calf, 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—whichever, 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 a fine parlor.

Mrs. Bryan saw to that. She took the whole carriage house, or barn, as it were, and applied a liberal hand in its furnishings—bright rugs on the cement floor, draped curtains at the windows, stands of books and pieces of statuary here and there, and plenty of the big, cozy chairs that make American life really worth living.

When Farmer Bryan came home to his barn, after plugging at the crops in the field all day, he could rest up in the landeomest and biggest sitting room and parlor outside of Lincoln, Neb.—and that was going some in barns, for Chicago 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 crowd 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 the home of their fathers, and find that they have themselves, in 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 tour, crowded with honors such as might have been thrust upon another Grant, sent back Mr. Bryan endowed with strange statues from Japan and rare vases from China and fine pieces of bric-a-brac from Europe; but it could not send back any other man than the one who started from Nebraska.

In his home he is still the same cheerful, paternal family head, the energetic professional man whose withdrawal from the law has broadened him into the requirements of other liberal vocations, the hearty host whose welcome is as whole-souled as it is genial.

An hour earlier he was Bryan the farmer, with an eye alert for every hint of nature, from the lanker of a hen to the feel of the wind on his cheeks.

Now he is the scholar, the friendly conversation-

### REALIZED HIS LIFE DREAM

alist, or the man of affairs chatting at his ease, or, when need is—as it usually is—working like a beaver in his office in the basement.

There are three porches girdling Fairview, but it is rarely that they fulfil their prime purpose of supplying a place for the refreshing rest and the outdoor Whitman found so inviting to his soul. Fairview and its owner and its 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 at being Editor Bryan, or Author Bryan, or Correspondent Bryan, or more of the Protean Bryans which his multitudinous 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; 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 the details of the literature, the arts, the questions and the affairs of the day.

Here, then, is one key to the mystery of the disappearance at 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 the 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 ways and means she found to establish and build up the Bureau of Distribution that claim charity's title, of one-tenth, annually from her husband's income.

The truest, 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 growing—and there is the secret of Farmer Bryan's wagging tail—out of the same source. Sometimes she can be seen driving into Lincoln in his regular farm wagon, a 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



A Quiet Home Hour

year 1908, who were expert skinflints, as there have been excellent husbands and fathers who were execrable employers. What sort of a "boss" is Bryan?

We can leave the farm help in 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 uppleh 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 "B" and an m-dash, anyway.

### A "COMMONER" IN TRUTH

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 100,000 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 hushy 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 for 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 done by the "kickers" who are bound by contract with some Lincoln firm, 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. Politically, lecturing, farming—the countless avocations of his life—leave him more nearly the editor in the abstract than the majority of men who have made a success of journalism by the sheer force of their thinking and writing and by their capacity for the selection of capable assistants.

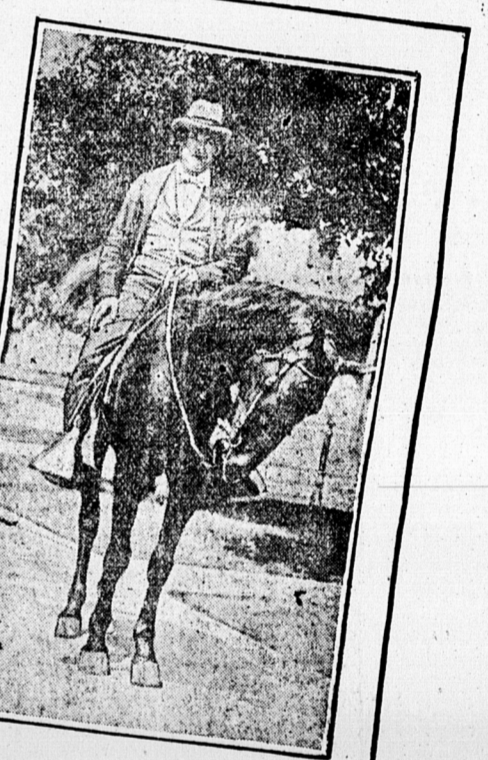
But when the "boss" does come to the office, the sobriquet of "commoner," which has attached itself to him, becomes apparent in its full significance. There is no trace of the boss in his attitude; there is even no trace of that paternal air which in the last remnant of authority usually preserved by the type setter and his assistants.

The relations between Editor Bryan and the Commoner's workpeople are those of complete and unaffected equality. Any of them is free to accost 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, unobtrusive, or, if you will, patronage, or, if you will, conscious authority, common to all business enterprises elsewhere, is noticeably absent,



Ready for a tour of the farm



Ready for a tour of the farm

There is about it neither affectation, long-headed policy, nor even any intentional abdication of the forms of authority.

The simple, illuminating fact is that the business is organized on a plan which, while it is far from being the altruism hoped for by selfish incompetents in 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 few 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 hospitality anything more objectionable than a good thing.

He charts a special trolley car for the trip to Fairview and plays the host as he plays the "boss," frankly a companion and as frankly a friend.

If there is any game or contest during the picnic, he is likely to be in it as the most energetic kid among the boys, and, if during the winter visit he is hour threatened to drag heavily, he is ready with home or at that of his brother. Thus far, however, nobody in Lincoln has discovered in these two hospitality anything more objectionable than a good thing.

So things go rather happily under Bryan, the "boss," 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 artistic husband, 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 its head approaches his half century in 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, strangely 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 revived, without reproach.