

Mrs. William Jennings Bryan the Woman, Wife, Mother and Home



Great Hall on Main Floor With Portrait of Jefferson.

By Hester Bronson Copper.



ALTHOUGH the name of Bryan has been a household word for more than a decade, there is comparatively little known of the gentlewoman who has gone bravely on by the side of the "Great Commoner," proving herself a most worthy helpmeet, "tolling, rejoicing, sorrowing," ever comforting and sustaining him by her Christian fortitude and wealth of womanly virtues.

Mrs. Bryan is a woman of intellectuality and strength of character, and had she not become distinguished as the wife of a renowned statesman, she might easily have won fame for her achievements in literature or some learned profession.

Mary Elizabeth Baird was born at Perry, Ill., June 17, 1861. She came of good old sturdy stock, her mother, Lovina Baird, being of English descent, the daughter of Col. Darius Dexter, of Dexterville, N. Y., now a part of Jamestown on Chautauqua lake. Her father, John Baird, whose death occurred May 3, 1905, was of Scotch-Irish ancestry, his lineage dating back to Col. Henry Winter, one of the most prominent men of Northampton county, Pa., in the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1828 Colonel Winter was a Presidential elector from Pennsylvania, and cast his vote for Andrew Jackson. He was appointed a courier to deliver the report of the electoral vote in Washington and made the trip on horseback.

As a girl Miss Baird enjoyed good educational advantages. Her education was begun in the public schools, after which she attended Monticello Seminary at Galesburg, Ill., one year, and the Presbyterian Academy at Jacksonville, Ill., two years, graduating from the latter institution with first honors in June, 1883. She returned the next year for post-graduate work. It was while at college

that she met Mr. Bryan, and the happy romance of life was begun. He was at that time attending the Illinois College, and during their marriage following four years later, in 1884, they resided in Jacksonville until their removal to Nebraska three years later.

Becomes Practical Partner.

In order to keep herself in closer touch with his professional life Mrs. Bryan read law with her husband as instructor, taking the course prescribed by the Union College of Law of Chicago. She was admitted to practice in the supreme court of Nebraska in November, 1888, not having the intention of practicing as a means of livelihood, but that her knowledge

Fairview, the Beautiful Country Home of the Bryans.

of the profession might be of greater value in the constant and careful assistance she rendered Mr. Bryan in his work.

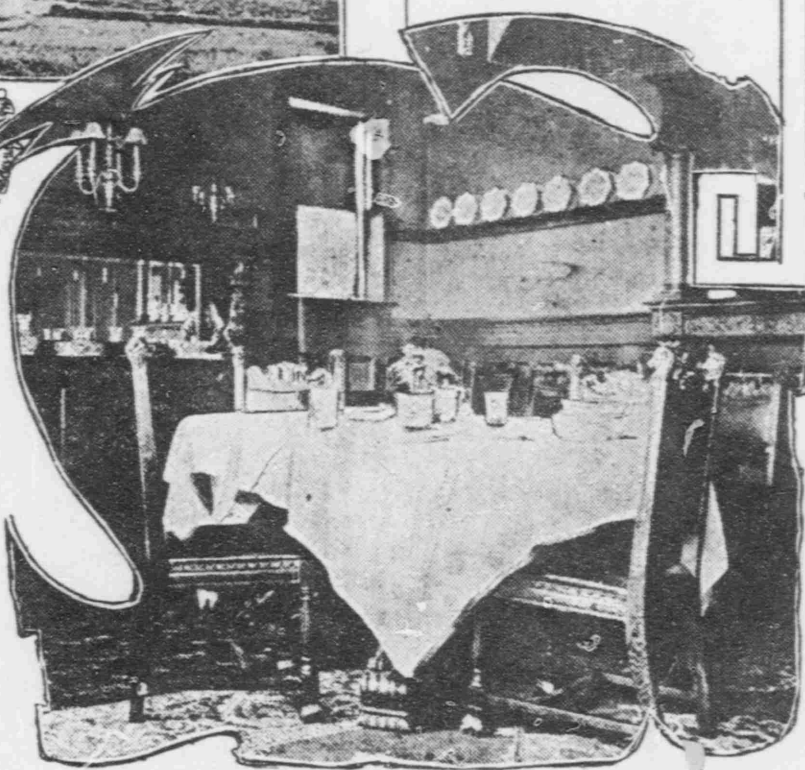
Mrs. Bryan is also fond of literature and the languages. She devoted one year to the special study of literature in the Illinois College, and during more recent years has taken a post-graduate course of one year in German at the Nebraska State University. She says that every mother necessarily keeps her knowledge of Latin somewhat fresh in memory through the school days of her children, while helping them conquer Caesar and vanquish Cicero, but for her own part she finds her greatest pleasure in the study of German. She is fond of music, but makes no pretense at being an adept in that art.

Bryan believes that her first and best efforts should be devoted to the welfare of her home and family. Such duties have claimed so much of her time that little has been left for other work. She has been both mother and companion to her children, aiding them through the struggles of school days, giving always of her love and wisdom for their growth in education and culture.

There are three children, the eldest, Ruth, who, since her marriage to W. H. Leavitt in October, 1902, has made her home in New Orleans. Then comes William J., Jr., a stalwart youth of eighteen years, who measures 5 feet 11 inches, and weighs 150 pounds. Lastly, there is the baby of the family, Miss Grace, who has enjoyed about sixteen summers, and in the meantime has grown as tall as her mother, all of which goes to show that Nebraska winds and weather have not labored in vain on the rising generation.

Mrs. Bryan's father, who died at the age of eighty-two, made his home for many years with his only daughter, and the most touching incident in the life of Mrs. Bryan is the filial devotion she lavished upon him. For the last thirty years of his life he was blind.

Until a few years ago the Bryans were identified with a Presbyterian



The Dining Room at Fairview.

church in Lincoln, but withdrew from that well-established organization that they might give their support to two smaller struggling congregations in the neighborhood. At present the family attends services at a little chapel near their country home, where they feel they can come near to the heart of nature and the great Creator. With them simplicity and sincerity are more to be desired in divine services than ostentation and display.

Out of door sports and amusements have always been very attractive to Mrs. Bryan, although she has devoted no considerable time to the acquirement of proficiency in any sport except that of swimming, which she learned in the commodious bathhouse in Lincoln. Driving affords her much pleasure, and she has at her command two splendid horses, her driver and a fine saddle horse. She enjoys travel as a means of recreation only when it is proving of value in extending her knowledge of the world and its natural wonders.

Something About Their Home.

The Bryan estate outside of Lincoln now comprises about 150 acres of fertile rolling land. In the autumn of

1901 the construction of the present mansion was begun. Before it was ready for occupancy the family fitted up several rooms in the brick barn, and lived there most happily and comfortably. They could well afford to do this, for the splendid home which was nearing completion is, beyond doubt, one of the finest private residences to be found in the West. The house, which is built of chipped brick and stone, is situated on the brow of a fine grassy eminence, which slopes away in every direction, and from which an unobstructed view of the country for miles around may be enjoyed. Therefore the name "Fairview" is most appropriate. Every modern convenience is found within this home, and an electric car line within reasonable walking distance carries one directly into the city.

It was in the construction of this large house that Mrs. Bryan's executive ability and sound business judgment came to the front. Mr. Bryan was absent much of the time, and as the building was not by contract, but under the personal supervision of the owners, it was necessary that a strong hand should be at the helm. To see the final results is to know that she basked well. Within the portals is every evidence of culture and exten-

sive travel. A weighty volume would be required in which to do justice to the vast collection of personal gifts to both Mr. and Mrs. Bryan; tokens of respect and admiration from every quarter of the globe. There are fine paintings, rare old pottery, beautiful specimens of the taxidermist's art, autograph portraits of famous men and women, and quaint old relics from the Holy Land.

One witty Nebraska editor has asserted that he "gazed upon a half-cord of gold-headed canes." During the campaign of 1896 Mr. Bryan was made the recipient of a vast number of silver souvenirs (free silver, you know), quite enough to establish a mint, I am sure. The gift most highly

prized by Mrs. Bryan is a life-sized bust of her husband, carved from Carrara marble in Florence, Italy, and presented to her by the Democrats of the District of Columbia. Just above this handsome bust in the drawing room there hangs a fine portrait of the late Philo S. Bennett, of New Haven, Conn.

In the great hall on the main floor may be seen a life-sized portrait of Thomas Jefferson, while just below on a stand there is usually displayed a priceless old punch bowl or mortar, used in the home of Jefferson. The library is probably the favorite room in the Bryan home. Here are gathered many valuable books, most of them being works of the great masters, both of ancient and modern times. Many souvenirs are on display here, but perhaps the one thing most in harmony with Western life is a fine specimen of the American eagle, captured on the plains of Nebraska, and mounted by a personal friend of the family. An open piano in the library suggests that they often have "just a song at twilight, when the lights are low," while a grand piano in the drawing room is used for more formal functions.

On the basement floor is found the private office and study of Mr. Bryan, which is probably the most interesting room to many visitors who wend their way to Fairview. Here may be seen an extensive and valuable "working library" of political and economic works, and a massive desk well laden with papers and communications, for it is here that Mr. Bryan prepares his editorial work, when at home. A stenographer comes from the city to attend to much of the heavy correspondence that finds its way to Fairview.

Another room especially worthy of notice is the museum or den on the third floor, which is maintained particularly for the pleasure and education of the children. It contains specimens from land and sea, Aztec pottery, curious weapons from foreign shores, queer fish and birds and shells, and several sets of natural history to aid and instruct the son and daughter of the house in their search for knowledge.

Thus it is that Mrs. Bryan's best thought and endeavor are centered in the welfare of her home, and the pleasure of her family. Her closest friends and associates find embodied in her character all the requisites of the highest type of womanhood. She is a companionable mother, and a steadfast friend. Endowed with much good common sense and practical religion, her work outside to home circle is productive of satisfactory results, while her scholarly achievements and her ability as a fluent speaker, aided by her gracious manner, well fit her for any exalted station to which she might be called.

The Christmas Celebration.

Biltmore house was formally opened Christmas Day, 1895, with a jolly party. At the house warming were Mrs. William H. Vanderbilt, who had helped her son select the site, Mrs. Bronckley, an aunt; Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Vanderbilt, his brother and sister-in-law; Mrs. Kissam, Miss Kissam, Mr. and Mrs. W. Seward Webb and their son and daughter; Cornelius Vanderbilt and family, William K. Vanderbilt, W. D. Shorne, and many others of the New York smart set. All came in private cars and added their private retinues to Mr. Vanderbilt's already huge army of servants. The provisions for the feast arrived by railroads. The Christmas tree celebration began at 11 o'clock and 500 employees of the estate were given a spread in addition to the family dinner. The festivities continued for ten days. There were coaching parties, and the New Yorkers enjoyed all these sports at the Christmas season with greatest zest.

Yet there has been nothing but disappointment and bitterness in all this splendor and expense. The master of Biltmore being the youngest brother of Cornelius, William K., and Frederick W. Vanderbilt, the more joked by members of his family because of the costliness of conducting the North Carolina estate. It was told of George W. Vanderbilt one day after his brother Cornelius had twitted him on Biltmore that with more than usual tartness he replied:

"I would just as soon have my estate in Biltmore as yours in cordage." This was the retort incisive, as it was generally known that Cornelius had dropped what most persons would consider a fortune through ill-advised speculation in cordage. While George W. Vanderbilt, with the other members of his family, has had many

annoyances from undesirable neighbors in his brown-stone mansion at 540 Fifth Avenue, New York, who altogether cost the Vanderbilts some four million dollars in the erection of unsightly buildings, it is said on good authority that none of these could approach that which is said to have induced Mr. Vanderbilt to desert Biltmore.

The good citizens of Asheville have in a way always "chained" Mr. Vanderbilt, who has never entered into the business life of this little mountain city. They declare that his only motive beneficence was to give six gold fishes to be placed in a public fountain on Pack Square, and very few of them failed to do this. They bear no love for the New Yorker. They agree that he has expended millions of dollars in Asheville, but they insist that he did so with an idea that it would be returned doubly.

Succession of Law Suits. Biltmore was hardly under construction before the basis for many of the little law suits were laid. While some of the workmen were blasting rock out of a driveway, a huge section of the loose stone in hurdling through the air struck a commercial traveler. The case was fought for ten years, and finally settled out of court. The fact that Mr. Vanderbilt won or settled a few of these petty cases for very small sums did not make them the less rankling, for he always maintained that they were brought for the purpose of bleeding him.

There were other suits started against Mr. Vanderbilt in New York. The tax assessors got after him. They wanted him to pay taxes on \$50,000 personal property. He was called a tax-dodger in Biltmore, and after he proved that he was not he exacted an apology from the mistaken parties. Mr. Vanderbilt carried more than \$1,000,000 insurance in the Mutual Life, and this is said to have given him a good deal of trouble. He presented to the New York College for the Training of Teachers, of which he is a trustee, his suite on Morningside Heights. He is a member of the Century Association, of many leading clubs of New York city, and of the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Metropolitan Club of Washington. He maintains a home at 1809 New Hampshire Avenue northwest, here in Washington, and spends much of his time mingling with society in the Capital of the Nation.

FOOD IN THE MIDDLE AGES

WHAT would be the sensation of our ancestors of the middle ages if he could sit down to a modern breakfast table?

To begin with fruits, these were almost unknown to the men of this period; certainly in their present form. So were most of our vegetables. The only vegetable which seems to be more or less indigenous over the greater part of the world is the squash-pumpkin tribe. The pumpkin is very ancient, for it dates back to Cinderella.

Of course he knew the small wild cherry, with its bitter flavor, the little wild strawberry, the raspberry, blackberry, and plum. Apples, or "crabs," as Shakespeare calls them, were used in England, and generally roasted in order to deprive them of their astringency. The wild-hedge orange of China and India filtered into Europe occasionally, but it was scarcely eatable. Potatoes were, of course, unknown. Bananas were introduced in quantity to Europe within the lifetime of many middle-aged men. The grapefruit is the product of the past two decades, and even yet has seldom crossed the Atlantic. The peach was a poisonous shrub in Persia.

Strangely enough, it was the lack of fruit which led to the discovery of Asia. In those days, when salt fish was the usual diet of all nations, pepper became a luxury. Pepper plays a disproportionate part in history. Who speaks and sings of spices nowadays, when they can be procured at every grocery's store? Yet it was to obtain pepper that the East India Company was chartered during the reign of Elizabeth.

Oats were defined scornfully by Dr. Johnson as a food fed to men in Scotland and to horses in England. What would the worthy doctor have thought of our very modern breakfast foods—the flakes, the brans, the husks, the shreds, the various constituents of grains? Tea, coffee, and cocoa were, of course, unknown until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Sugar was the most costly of condiments. Bee-keeping was the practice of every farmer.

Our worthy ancestor broke his fast upon salt fish, or meat if he was wealthy or had access to some deer forest. He washed down his food with hot beer, spiced, or honey brew. A roasted crab-apple "sang in the bowl" on the very numerous saints' days. Our modern breakfast would startle our ancestor very much indeed. —Harper's Weekly.