

The Free Press Short Story

A VISIT FROM A LION

By WINFRED KIRKLAND

On the afternoon of the 20th, the people picked up their copies of the Bayliss Courier, for April 20, and read these startling headlines:

World-Famous Artist About to Visit Armond County  
Renowned Mural Painter Seeking Month's Rest in Hills  
Citizens' Committee of Bayliss Makes Plans for Reception

Under these headlines, the Bayliss Courier contained a story one column long beginning as follows:

"The Courier is proud to announce that one of the leading lights of the art world of America is about to be the guest of Armond County. David Farnham is a name familiar to two continents. As a mural painter the inspiration of his themes is as noteworthy as the splendor of his colorings. Bayliss feels itself honored by the presence of so illustrious an artist. It is rumored that he comes to visit relatives in our vicinity."

It was just here that the Bayliss newspaper dropped from the hand of its subscribers in Trumansville. Yes, it was just like the Courier to come out with the first news about a "lion"—a distinguished visitor who surely belonged of right to Charley Jones and his weekly Trumansville Echo. From behind its sleepy maples, Trumansville peered resentfully at the noisy, upstart city of Bayliss. Whose fault was it that Bayliss knew so much about the great man, while Trumansville and its Echo knew nothing? David Farnham was the father of the Mayor, and the wife of their minister. Under present unhappy circumstances, it wasn't to be expected that a Citizens' Committee in Trumansville could presume to make plans to welcome the world-famous artist.

There was no committee to meet his train. Only the young minister, Edwin, and his yellow-haired wife, Pauline. Looking down the street, Trumansville people regretted that the first thing they would see would be Molly Dunlop's tumbling cottage, and Molly at her wash-tubs, and Molly's dirty red-headed baby at the gate, and Molly's scarlet tomato cans flaunting pink geraniums from the doorstep and window-sill.

Trumansville watched the three come swinging up the street abreast. They were very near the spot now. Would Pauline point it out to him? She didn't. Instead, she directed his gaze across the street, to the most gorgeous budding maple of all. David Farnham caught the baby up, and set him on the post and appeared to talk him into wild hilarity. So it happened that the little son of the village washerwoman was the first to greet the renowned mural painter.

There was another building which Trumansville people regretted. They were fearful that Pauline would say something about it to her father as they passed. Again she didn't. And as they passed, people saw that he was tall, and had a great mane of thick and tawny hair, and walked with a swing in his step and a glow on his face. Only Sarah Olcott, whose millinery windows afforded a close view, muttered in surprise: "But he looks tired, and that gray suit is shabby."

At breakfast next morning the May sun poured in at the dining-room windows. In the past four weeks Pauline and Edwin had forgotten that any morning could be so gay. At last Mr. Farnham grasped the edges of the table with his sensitive hands and heaved himself up.

"Holiday! Holiday! From this 2nd of May to the 29th."

Pauline controlled a sudden catch in her throat. He had said the 29th. But the 28th of May had become, for another reason, an ominous date, heavy with approaching disappointment. Where's the open room all by myself, while you wash the dishes. Where's the quickest way out to May?

"Down the street past the station, then any road that goes up into the hills."

With his old cap on his head, David Farnham turned about at the doorstep. He beamed from head to foot. "Not going to speak to a living soul for a month!" he announced. Pauline, sweeping along beneath the budding maples, not another person was visible except Sarah Olcott, polishing her glass case inclosing four dejected hats. Pauline, by the porch pillar, watched. Would the cross-street woman in the world go inside? Would the friendliest man in the world pass by? She didn't. He didn't. He stayed so long that Pauline ran into the hall, whipped off her apron, and was off and after him.

Sarah looked as bright as a Mayflower. Surely he couldn't have been there half an hour, yet Sarah was already exhibiting from her treasure drawer under the counter a flaunting heap of steamship folders. But it was not of folders that she was speaking, but of that ever-irritating near-by city.

"We get jealous of Bayliss sometimes. Bayliss thinks itself so up and doing."

"Is it?"

"There's no more doubt that Bayliss is a live town than that Trumansville is a dead one."

David Farnham looked at her long and keenly.

Pauline wondered how far he'd get

thru for lack of funds—and lack of interest!"

The three of them were so worried over Trumansville that baby Danny had to do something to recall them to May and the sunshine. He suddenly grasped two handfuls of the lion's mane and roared with laughter. It required Pauline's whole strength to disengage that baby and then to entold him in one great hungry hug.

"You see, daddy, I wanted Trumansville to carry on together, just once, for the future. I didn't want Trumansville just to die out. You understand, for you've always put into your paintings what you're trying to say. I wanted Trumansville to make a happy new building for all the little Dannels that might ever come to this town!"

By the end of the first week of his visit, it seemed as if their lion might have lived in Trumansville all his life.

One late clear afternoon David Farnham started off apparently for the open road, with sketching traps in hand. Passing the unfinished Community House, he appeared to have a sudden thought; he retraced his steps, picked his way amid tumbled beams and planks, and over upheaved soil, and went inside. He stayed so long that Silas Putney, watching, decided that he must have left by the back way and taken the cross-lot path to the West Road, as indeed he had, leaving his sketching traps behind him.

After that, David Farnham entered the rough-boarded door of the Community House whenever he felt like it, and passed out by the back, and was off cross lots to the open country. Nobody ever entered, following him—not Pauline, for he chose his hours carefully to coincide with hers over the kitchen stove, and not Trumansville, for Trumansville never spoke of the Community House, either to their visitor or to his daughter. Then one day, suddenly as a bomb bursting from the morning's mail, came the Courier, announcing to Trumansville that Bayliss was about to take their lion.

The business offices of Silas Putney and Charley Jones were not far apart. The two men had got no further than the headlines of the Courier when they ran out to find each other. They collided in the middle of the first paragraph. They pronounced the most virulent word in the Trumansville vocabulary, "Bayliss!" and then they gasped, "There he comes himself!"

He came stalking happily on, wind on his forehead, hat in his hands held behind him. Silas pulled himself together.

"May I, Mr. Farnham, be the first man to congratulate you? Ten thousand dollars! It is a large sum, but it can be raised in Bayliss."

"See!" cried Chatterbox Charley, thrusting the paper forward. "It is pouring in! Chamber of Commerce, \$1,000; Women's Club, \$500; Eddington Wholesale Grocery, \$300. That's Bayliss' public spirit, with the Courier to rub it into the outlying districts! But, of course, Mr. Farnham, Trumansville congratulates the Bayliss on securing your services."

"My services for what?"

"For the walls of the new auditorium. Now we shall never hear the Ten thousand dollars!" The sum made Silas almost apoplectic.

"Ten thousand dollars for what?" asked David Farnham.

"For painting the walls of the auditorium."

"Not a bad sum for a small city," said David Farnham, suddenly professional; "and who is the artist?"

Two blank faces stared at him. "Why, of course, you!"

David Farnham woke up. "I'll kindly let me see that paper!" He pounded his hat down on his head. He read. Pauline might have understood the glint in his hardening eyes, the iron grimace beginning to freeze his lips.

"We congratulate you, sir!" It was heart-felt and in unison.

"On what do you congratulate me?"

"On this offer from Bayliss."

"I never heard of it until this minute. Bayliss has not had the courtesy to consult me before publishing this article, before rushing in contributions to this fund! I will not paint for Bayliss! I have other work that I prefer!"

He turned on his heel. No open country for him that day, but instead, his Pauline. He found her alone at her desk, a little strained—with the weekly accounts. He noted with relief that the mailed copy of the morning's Courier was unopened, and remembered how they had tossed it aside to enjoy a riot of muffins and marmalades.

"Daddy Dave, there's a big official-looking letter for you from Bayliss. What in the world can it be?"

David Farnham sank into a chair, stretching out his long legs and leaning back his head. "Read it!" he said. He heard the envelope torn open, heard the heavy paper crackle. "Well!" he asked.

"O daddy, daddy, I congratulate you!"

The lion, shot to his feet. "You need not; I am going to refuse!"

Pauline clamped a cold little hand down on her account book. "O daddy—but for all of us—"

"Paul, there is something better that I want to do—"

He hurried into the half-bred upstairs to his room, where he knew there was a noble maple standing just outside his window to steady him. Erect before it, he repeated, "Something better I want to do Paul—for you."

Swiftly, one by one, the days fell off the calendar, and nearer and nearer came the 28th day of May. It was very early on that date, still dark, when David Farnham slipped out. That is, he thought he slipped, but Pauline smiled beneath her warm covers, wondering what daddy's surprise would be this time. All her life Daddy Dave had always managed to plan a surprise before he went away anywhere.

The maples were the first to see the notice—naturally, since it was nailed on six of them, chosen at successive points

on their mile-long procession. The notice read:

THE COMMUNITY HOUSE OF TRUMANSVILLE as previously announced will be open to the Public on May the twenty-eighth, at Four p. m.

This notice was not only nailed on the maples; it was also pinned on the dining-room door, and beneath it another:

HAVE PAULINE AWAY URGENT BUSINESS Will return at Four p. m.

# Did You Ever Stop To Think?

By Edson R. Waite, Shawnee, Oklahoma

Community advertising addresses itself to the tourist, homeseeker, investor, manufacturer, and farmer.

Most everybody believes in respect being shown to old age. The sentiment is right and a useful one, although mainly to the extent that the younger party recognizes the fortitude of the older party in adding what he has to the foundations of wisdom and knowledge and to the extent that the respect rendered is also a recognition of the inevitability with which the youth of one day is the old age of tomorrow.

Quite surprising how daylight sports and events can be held at night nowadays by the aid of searchlights, floodlights and spotlights being set at various parts of the ground, making the field so clear that every unit taking part is distinctly seen.

You should never lose an opportunity to let the outside world know the good things about your town.

Some contend that when times are bad every opportunity should be taken to cease work, cut down wages, discharge men and stop production, and through such efforts bring back better times. This, they think, is economy. While others maintain that in order to bring back normal times we must redouble every energy in every direction toward getting better markets and more money in circulation.

Spasmodic advertising does not bring the results that can be obtained by continuous advertising.

Telephones are nearly as necessary to a business as advertising. The use of a telephone can help to build business, as well as to destroy it. When complaints are made over the telephone, courteous answers will smooth out many misunderstandings, while discourteous answers can lose more business than can be regained in many a day.

It is said that a lot of cities would progress faster if a number of its citizens would take a ship and when in mid-ocean jump overboard.

By advertising, the desire to possess is created in the minds of those who have the money to buy.

**Debts Collected**

The sooner you send your list of outstanding accounts to

**KELLY & AIKEN**

The Collectors

at Orangeville, the quicker you will have funds on hand to meet your own requirements.

Established 1890 and "Still Lead the Field"

**RIB-ROLL ROOFING**

Colored or plain. For houses, barns, sheds, garages, "Council Standard" or "Acorn" quality. Easy and quick to lay, permanent, proof against fire. Free estimates gladly sent. Send measurements.

Makers of Preston Steel Truss Barns, Galvanized Iron and Steel Doors and Windows, Pleated Lead-Hed Walls, Double-Mesh Metal Lath, Ventilators, Roll-Up Fold Garage Doors, All kinds Sheet Metal Building Material.

**Eastern Steel Products Limited**

Quapp St., Preston, Ont. Factories at Montreal and Toronto