

finest highway bridges in Southwestern Texas, was built. The sale of the county's public school lands was also inaugurated at the price of \$5.00 per acre, which sales have accumulated a school fund of about \$80,000.00 to date (1895). Judge Fischer has at various times served on the Board of City Aldermen and as School Trustee of the city. He married, in 1865, Miss Mary Conring, a daughter of Dr. H. Conring. They have eight children, seven of whom

are living. The names of these children are: Alex, Carl (deceased), Hilmar, Hermina, Emil, Freda and Erick.

Judge Fischer is highly esteemed for his broad citizenship and his many excellent traits of character. He has ever been an effective worker for the advancement of his city, county and State, and has taken an active part in all movements in that direction.

AUGUST KEONNECKE,

FREDERICKSBURG,

One of the first settlers of Gillespie County, was born in Prussia, March 23, 1832, and came to Texas in 1881. Landing at Indianola in December of that year, he proceeded thence to San Antonio, and from that place to Gillespie County, where he pre-empted one hundred and sixty acres of land on Cane creek, twelve miles northeast of Fredericksburg, in what is now the Keonnecke settlement.

To this he afterwards added until he owned a farm of two thousand acres, which he has apportioned to his children. He married, in 1855, Miss Charlotte Bearns, daughter of Christian Bearns, a pioneer of 1853, who lived, during the later years of his life, at Palo Alto. Mr. and Mrs. Keonnecke have five children: Gaustav, Hermann, William, Annie, and Otto. Annie married C. F. Luckenbach, of Fredericksburg; Gustav married Miss Albertine Kramer; Hermann married Miss Emma Hebenicht; and William married Miss Bertha Hebenicht.

Mr. Keonnecke has served as Justice of the Peace and County Commissioner of his county, and has been an active and effective worker for the upbuilding of his section of the State. His father, Frederick Keonnecke (a weaver and owner of woolen mills in Germany), and an uncle, Charles Keonnecke, came to Texas in 1848, and were followed in 1853 by William Keonnecke, another uncle of the subject of this notice.

Frederick died of yellow fever at Indianola, while there to meet his brother William, whose arrival he expected in the country. Charles has retired from active pursuits and lives in Fredericksburg.

William located in the Keonnecke settlement on Cane creek, where he established a farm adjoining that of his nephew, August Keonnecke, and resided until the time of his death, which occurred June 9, 1894, in the seventy-third year of his age.

SIMON WIESS,

BEAUMONT.

The poetic fancy of the Greeks was not slow to note the great dissimilarities that mark the destinies of men ushered into being amid the same environments — destinies, the general outlines and ultimate ends of which seem to be beyond their control — and they wove into the song and drama

and theology of those ancient days the idea of three silent sisters, the Fates, sitting in the dark weaving constantly at their looms the destinies of gods and men. It was a beautiful conceit. The mind's-eye, which needs no lamp to aid its vision, can almost see the shutters flying back and forth, back and

forth, working threads, dark and bright, into the warp and woof, controlled by an impulse flowing from the unknowable center of the unknown. The same idea has, in later times, found expression in the deeply pious predestinarianism of Calvinism, the coldly callous indifference of fatalism, such popular expressions as "Man proposes and God disposes," and the lines "There is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may," and in a thousand other mental conceptions and forms of speech. To what extent each life is pre-ordered and the limits within which free-agency operates, we know not. We know, however, that the serf of Russia, until a few generations back, was born into conditions that he could never hope to alter, and that fixed, from its beginning, the general course and tenor of his life; that every man, however brilliant his inherited talents, however great the wealth that descends to him, however exalted the station into which he is introduced by the fact of birth, however free he may imagine himself to be to do as he pleases, is yet surrounded by limitations that (although as invisible as the air or thought itself) are, yet, as strong as forged and tempered steel and that he can by no possibility break through. The efforts of the bird that beats its feeble wings against the bars of its cage are not more futile. Two boys are playing upon the village green. One will till the soil where his eyes first beheld the light and, passing quietly through the scenes of youth and manhood, descend through an uneventful old age to his place in the village church-yard where his dust and bones will mingle with those of his fore-fathers of many generations. The other will pass through many strange scenes and thrilling experiences, perhaps, by flood and field, and find his home and final life-work and final resting-place, in a land of which he has, as yet, not so much as heard the name.

Mrs. Hemans, in her poem "The Graves of a Household," thus beautifully expresses the thought:—

They grew in beauty side by side,
They filled one home with glee,
Their graves are severed far and wide,
By mount, and stream and sea.

The same fond mother bent at night
O'er each fair sleeping brow,
She had each folded flower in sight —
Where are those dreamers now!

One, midst the forest of the West,
By a dark stream is laid,
The Indian knows his place of rest,
Far in the cedar-shade.

The sea, the blue lone sea hath one,
He lies where pearls lie deep;
He was the loved of all, yet none
O'er his low bed may weep.

One sleeps where Southern vines are drest
Above the noble slain;
He wrapt his colours round his breast
On a blood-red field of Spain.

And one, o'er her the myrtle showers
Its leaves by soft winds fanned;
She faded 'midst Italian flowers,
The last of that bright band.

And parted thus, they rest who played
Beneath the same green tree;
Whose voices mingled as they prayed
Around one parent knee.

The truth is that no man can tell what the future has in store for him — what pleasures, what heart-aches, what successes, what reverses, what triumphs, what disasters, or how he shall fare him battling amid the thousand and one cross-currents of circumstance. But of one thing there is a certainty and that is, that the man who makes the voyage of a long life, meets and overcomes its difficulties, keeps heart, mind and hands undefiled and achieves honorable success, has earned a patent of nobility that belongs to him of divine right and that entitles him to the confidence and esteem of his fellow-men while living and his memory to preservation from oblivion to which the indiscriminating hand of time seeks to consign all transitory things.

In the early days of the present century there lived in the little town of Lublin, Poland, a sturdy lad, who, after years spent in travel upon three continents, was to make his home in Texas, and here exercise a wide and beneficent influence and leave his impress upon the communities in which he lived. We refer to the late lamented Simon Wiess, Sr., of Wiess' Bluff, Jasper County, Texas.

Mr. Wiess was born at Lublin, Poland, January 1, 1800, and remained there until sixteen years of age when he started out in the world to try his fortunes. The limits of this notice will not permit a detailed account of his various adventures or commercial experiences, but the following facts, taken from his Masonic chart, will give some idea of the extent of his travels and the high character he acquired in early life and ever afterwards maintained. He was a Royal Arch Mason at Constantinople, April 2, 1825, and went to Asia Minor the same year, where he held a prominent position in the Masonic circles. He visited Mt. Lebanon Lodge, Boston, Mass., February 22, 1826, which is the first we hear of him in the United



SIMON WIESS.

States. August 17th, 1828, he was in San Domingo and there participated with the Masonic fraternity. He also visited Albion Lodge No. 333, at Barbadoes, West Indies, and received the degree of Past Master. On the ninth of May, 1829, he visited Amity Lodge No. 277, at ———, on the registry of the Right Worshipful G. L., of Ireland. May 11th, 1829, he visited Integrity Lodge, No. 259, at ———, and there received Mark Master degree; June 2, 1829, visited Union Lodge No. 462, at Georgetown, Demerara, and we find that in 1840, he visited Galveston and participated with Harmony Lodge, No. 6. In 1847, he met with DeWitt Clinton Lodge No. 129, in Jasper County, Texas. Two years later, April 17th, 1849, he met with the Woodville, Texas, Lodge. There are few countries in Europe that he did not visit. He lived at various times in Turkey, Asia Minor, the West Indies, Central and South America, and Mexico. He also traveled extensively through the United States and lived for a time in Louisiana before making his home in Texas. He could read, write and speak fluently seven languages. In his young days before coming to America he owned several sailing vessels and engaged in the trade being carried on between New England and the West Indies. In 1836 he was Deputy Collector of Customs for the Republic of Texas at Camp Sabine (now Sabine town) near the border-line between Texas and Louisiana. It was the military post of the United States at that time. Gen. Gaines was stationed there in command of four thousand troops and, during the war for Texas Independence, it was believed that he and Gen. Sam Houston entered into an agreement under which the latter was to retreat in a northeasterly direction before the Mexican army, until it followed him across the disputed boundary line between Texas and the United States and then Gaines was to turn out with his regulars, attack Santa Anna and follow him, if necessary, to the Rio Grande and into Mexico. If any such agreement was entered into, subsequent events rendered the carrying out of its terms unnecessary. The three divisions of the Mexican army became separated and, marching through a country incapable of supporting such a large number of men, were worn down by days of marching over roads that were almost impassable, and thoroughly dispirited before the final blow of the revolution was struck. Houston took advantage of this combination of circumstances, joined battle with Santa Anna at San Jacinto and, with the unaided strength of the Texian arms, won one of the most glorious and decisive victories recorded in the annals of war — an achievement that justly immortalized his name. Mr. Wiess was acquainted

with Gen. Houston and the other heroes, orators and statesmen of the Republic, when in the prime and zenith of their fame.

In January, 1836, he was united in marriage to Miss Margaret Sturrock, at Natchitoches, La. She was a daughter of Wm. and Ann Sturrock, *nee* Miss Ann Swan, whose mother's maiden name was Miss Agnes Kerr, all of Scottish lineage. The Sturrock family came to America about 1830 and settled on the Hudson, remained there about two years and then went to New Orleans, from which place they moved to Natchitoches, La. In 1836 Mr. and Mrs. Wiess moved to Nacogdoches where he engaged in merchandising, a part of the time occupying the historic stone fort situated in that place. In 1838 he left Nacogdoches with his family and household effects aboard a keel-boat loaded with the first cotton ever transported down that stream to Sabine Pass, and disembarked at Beaumont where, and at Grigsby's Bluff, he merchandised until 1840, and then moved to Wiess' Bluff, in Jasper County, where he remained until his death, which occurred August 13, 1868. While living at Wiess' Bluff he was also engaged in merchandising, did a large receiving and forwarding business, handling most of the cotton raised in the section, and was interested in steamboating on the Neches river. He left six children: Pauline, who married Abel Coffin (deceased), she is still living at their old home in Jasper County; Napoleon, deceased and buried at Wiess' Bluff; Mark, William and Valentine, prominent mill-men largely interested in the Reliance Lumber Company, of Beaumont; and Massena, the youngest, who lives at Round Rock in Williamson County.

In all his dealings with his fellow-men, whether as a traveler or trader in the Orient, an owner of vessels plying the pirate-infested waters of the Spanish Main — on the steppes of Russia, in the Indies, in Central and South America, in his counting-room, in Southern Texas — everywhere and always, he manifested a just, generous and manly spirit.

A favorite quotation of his was the following lines of Philip Massinger: —

“ Briefly thus, then
 Since I must speak for all; your tyranny
 Drew us from our obedience. Happy those times
 When lords were styled fathers of families,
 And not imperious masters! when they numbered
 Their servants almost equal with their sons,
 Or one degree beneath them! when their labors
 Were cherished and rewarded, and a period
 Set to their sufferings; when they did not press
 Their duties or their wills beyond their power
 And strength of their performance, all things ordered

With such decorum as wise law-makers,
 From each well governed private house derived
 The perfect model of a commonwealth.
 Humanity then lodged in the hearts of men,
 And thankful masters carefully provided
 For creatures wanting reason. The noble horse,
 That, in his fiery youth, from his wide nostrils
 Neighed courage to his rider, and brake through
 Groves of opposed pikes, bearing his lord
 Safe to triumphant victory; old or wounded,
 Was set at liberty, and freed from service.
 The Athenian mules, that from the quarry drew
 Marble, hewed for the temples of the gods,
 The great work ended, were dismissed, and fed
 At the public cost; nay, faithful dogs have found
 Their sepulchers; but man to man more cruel,
 Appoints no end to the sufferings of his slave."

His was the true patriot's heart. He had a deep and intense love for the United States and free institutions. He hated tyranny, oppression and injustice in any form. He liberally rewarded those who served him. He was generous and true to his friends. His charity knew no fainting. He possessed none of that greedy and glutinous spirit that enables its possessor to fare sumptuously and with added zest unaffected by the starvation and the wails of the distressed which are bourne to him upon every breeze. He subordinated his desire for financial independence to the dictates of honor. He was true to every obligation as employer, citizen, husband, father and friend, and left behind him an untarnished name of which his descendants may feel justly proud. He died full of years, loved by many, respected by all. He sleeps with his fathers, a sleep that is the reward of a well-spent life. Peace to his ashes, and honor to the memory of his usefulness, kindliness and worth.

Mrs. Wiess, for so many years his beloved counsellor, companion and helpmate, who cheered and sustained him in many an hour of trial and difficulty, a truly noble woman, died at Wiess' Bluff, May 17, 1881. The following obituary, written by E. L. Armstrong, of Irene, Hill County, Texas, is a fitting testimonial to her many excellencies of character.

"Wiess — Died at Wiess' Bluff, Jasper County, Texas, May 17th, 1881, Mrs. Margaret Wiess. She was born in Scotland, near Dundee, June 12, 1814. Was married to Simon Wiess at Natchitoches, La., January 6th, 1836, with whom she lived happily until his death, which occurred in August, 1868.

"She came to Texas during the struggle for independence, and was intimately acquainted with

Gen. Sam Houston, Rusk and other noted men of the day.

"Forty-one years ago, she, with her husband, settled at Wiess' Bluff, where she lived until removed by 'relentless death.'

"She was the mother of six children, five of whom still live; the eldest died some years ago.

"She was a woman of extraordinary endowments, possessing all the rare excellencies that combine to make the true wife, the devoted mother and a successful keeper of home and the affairs of home.

"She was fully equal to the emergencies of life.

"As a mother she was the embodiment of kindness, guiding her children by the law of love; their success in life is attributable to the care and culture imparted at home.

"As a wife it was her chief joy to make her husband happy — to this end she lent her energies without stint, and her success was wonderful.

"As a friend she was true, devoted and obliging.

"She was truly benevolent to the poor and needy — never turning them away empty-handed.

"Her great heart was touched when suffering befell her kind, often giving to those that were better able to help themselves.

"She was reared a Presbyterian, but never united with the Church, not being situated so that she could do so.

"She was a woman of prayer and loved her Bible.

"I met her twenty-eight years ago and our acquaintance matured into mutual and abiding friendship; having spent many days and hours under her hospitable roof.

"Last December I saw her for the last time on earth — worn and emaciated by age and disease.

"She feared not the approach of death.

"At her request I read for and prayed with her, and conversed with her in regard to the approaching end; she had no fears, but trusted in the atoning blood.

"We are informed by her sons that her end was peace.

"We are to hear no more the hearty welcome to her home, nor note the many acts of kindness performed to make the weary itinerant comfortable and happy. But we will remember her through all the days of our pilgrimage.

"We extend to her children our heartfelt sympathy and invoke the blessings of heaven upon each one of them.

"May they also be ready."



MRS. SIMON WIESS