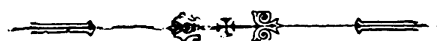


continuing the control of affairs there until 1887, when he came to Clinton, still, however, retaining his store and stock at Lane, which is now under the management of his brother, Europe L. Fosnaugh. When he began business our subject had a cash capital of \$175 and was therefore obliged to assume an indebtedness on his first stock of goods. He is now the owner of two stores, together with the stock they contain, and of a good residence in Clinton, pleasantly located in the northeastern part of the city.

At Lincoln, Logan County, in 1872, Mr. Fosnaugh was united in marriage with Miss Kitty Cunningham. The lady was born in the city of New York and is a woman whose worth of character is thoroughly appreciated by her friends as well as by her husband. The union has been blessed by the birth of four children—Rovenia, Irwin E., Austin and Lee. While in Lane Mr. Fosnaugh served as Justice of the Peace during a term of four years. He takes no active part in political affairs, having no taste for the excitements attendant upon that line of life, but generally votes the Democratic ticket.



JESSE B. WEEDMAN. "Walnut Grove Stock Farm," the property of the gentleman above named, is one of the most valuable estates of its size in De Witt County. It consists of one hundred and ninety-two acres on section 36, Rutledge Township, which is well watered from living springs and is therefore particularly adapted for the use to which it is put—that of affording pasturage and shelter for large herds of cattle. Mr. Weedman raises and feeds stock, devoting himself principally to thorough-bred Durhams and having at the head of his herd a fine bull, "Grover Cleveland." He is also the owner of the noble cow, "Florence," which is well known in this section. "Walnut Grove Farm" contains ten acres of timber, but the remainder of the acreage is tilled ground and pasturage.

Before giving a brief outline of the life of Jesse B. Weedman, it will not be out of place to make

some mention of those from whom he derived his being. His father, Asa Weedman, was born in Ohio and was a young man when with his parents he made the journey to this State with an old ox-team and wagon. The family reached McLean County and made their home in Randolph Grove. One of the members of the family was obliged to take a \$5 bill to Chicago to get it changed, so scarce was money in the country at that time. After sojourning in McLean County some time the Weedmans came to De Witt County and in Santa Anna Township Asa became of age. He subsequently returned to Randolph Grove and married Delilah Hand, a native of Ohio, who had come to this State with her parents when young.

The newly wedded couple purchased land in Santa Anna Township, and as a stock-raiser and feeder, Mr. Weedman made a fortune. He carried on more extensive operations in this line than any other man in this part of the county, and was prominent in business and social circles. He voted the Republican ticket, and took an active part in the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which he was a member for many years. His death occurred June 21, 1868, when he was fifty-one years old. His widow married Edward Adams and in 1876 removed to Kansas where she has since resided. She is an active member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a woman whose good qualities are duly appreciated by those who know her. She bore her first husband nine sons and daughters, seven of whom are now living, and all are married and the heads of families.

The gentleman whose name introduces these paragraphs was born on his father's homestead in Santa Anna Township, De Witt County, October 12, 1857. He was reared and educated there, continuing to form a part of the parental household until he became of age, since which time he has borne his own part in the battles of life. For five years he was a resident in Miami County, Kan., and before his marriage he was for two years in the employ of P. D. Armour of Chicago. He was at one time a resident in Belle Flower Township, McLean County, and has been the proprietor of "Walnut Grove Farm" two years.

The home of Mr. Weedman is presided over by

a lady who was known in her maidenhood as Miss Dora J. Geer. Their marriage was solemnized on the farm they now occupy, January 28, 1885, and has been blessed to them by the birth of one child—Carl C. Mrs. Weedman was born in De Witt County, January 26, 1867, and reared chiefly near her present home, receiving her education in the common schools. She resided with her parents until her marriage, fitting herself for the duties that belong especially to women. Her father, Oren Geer, is now a member of the firm of Jamison & Geer, dealers in hardware, etc., at Farmer City, and is the subject of a biographical notice in this volume. Mr. Weedman is a member of the Republican party and holds a place among the reliable and enterprising citizens of the county. He and his wife attend the Methodist Episcopal Church, and although not members of the society, are respected for their morality, intelligence and kindness.



ROBERT H. BENSON. It is doubtful if a man can be found within the bounds of Piatt County who has made a better record than the gentleman above named, whose portrait appears on the opposite page. He is the owner of a fine landed estate in Sangamon Township and an importer of and dealer in various kinds of domestic animals. His excellent reputation does not depend upon the solidity of his finances, but upon his personal character, and the favorable knowledge his acquaintances have of his generosity, integrity and reliability. He has traveled extensively, and from his journeys has gleaned much valuable knowledge concerning the habits and customs of the people, and stored his memory with interesting scenes.

Mr. Benson is descended from old Virginian families, his parents, Andrew and Sarah (Renick) Benson, having been natives of the Old Dominion. His grandfather, William Benson, is a native of the same State, and made it his home during his entire life. The father went to Clarke County, Ohio, about 1808, was married there in 1812, entered and cleared a tract of land and lived thereon until his death in 1826. He was then quite young,

having been born in 1781. The mother who was born December 20, 1795, passed away February 28, 1848. They were members of the Presbyterian Church, and were well regarded by their acquaintances. Their family consisted of four children, of whom our subject is the only survivor.

The gentleman of whom we write was born in Clarke County, Ohio, April 3, 1821, and his earliest recollections are of the humble log cabin that had been built by his father. His school privileges were but meagre, and the few months which he could devote to attendance at school, saw him seated upon a slab bench, perusing his text books by the light from a greased paper window, and receiving warmth from a huge fireplace. When he was twelve years old he began working in a brick-yard at \$4 a month. During the second year of his employment there he was able to burn brick and received \$10 per month for his services. During the winter of 1833-34, he sawed wood in Springfield for twenty-five cents a cord.

During the ensuing year young Benson worked for \$6 a month, and in 1836, when but fifteen years old began farming, improving the one hundred acres left by his father, and supporting his mother, he being the oldest son. In 1841, with a neighbor he made a trip to Missouri on horseback, but his horse dying when near the Mississippi River he was obliged to remain there, and going valiantly to work, he earned money with which to pay for the animal. He remained in the West until 1844, when he returned to his native State and hired out to drive cattle at \$4 a month. That fall he borrowed \$100 and bought about twenty head of cattle, thus beginning the stock-dealing which he has pushed forward with such excellent results.

A year after securing his first loan, Mr. Benson borrowed \$400 which he invested in cattle in Indiana in partnership with another man. He remained on the old homestead in Clarke County until the fall of 1864, although two years prior to that date he bought six hundred acres in Piatt County, Ill. In 1876 Mr. Benson purchased several imported Norman horses and began breeding pure equines. He had, however, bought some imported horses in Ohio some years prior to this. In 1882 he went to France, where he purchased nine head of Normans