

JAMES A. STEEL

At an age when the average boy of today is either engaged in his school work or at least still living under the care and gentle influences of his home James A. Steel was striking out for himself and beginning a career of independence that has brought him success as measured by the commercial standards of the world and gained for him the esteem and confidence of his fellows. He was born in Kirkland township, Adams county, Indiana, August 1, 1850. He was the son of Samuel Steel, concerning whom mention is made in the sketch of David Steel on another page of this volume. His father died before James had grown to be a very big boy, and the youngster started from his home at sixteen years of age to carve his own way. For the following four years he worked at various kinds of employment and at twenty years of age went into the saw mill business for himself at Peterson. He followed this business for the next three years and then sold out and purchased one half of the original estate of his father.

This was a tract of eighty acres and he lived on it and farmed it. In September, 1872, he married Miss Victoria LEBRUN, a daughter of August and Mary (Bainey) LEBRUN. She was a model wife and descended from resourceful people. Her parents were natives of France and came to this country in 1842. Her father was born in 1818 and her mother in 1816. After reaching this country her parents lived for a time in New York. They were attracted by the reports that came to them from Indiana and decided to venture west and establish themselves in the new state. Accordingly they came to Indiana and purchased eighty acres of land in Kirkland township. This farm they cleared and improved and later sold it and bought other land south of Decatur. This tract was their home until the death of August LEBRUN, when his widow disposed of the estate and removed to Decatur, where she made her home with her son until her death at ninety years, December 24, 1906.

The farm that James Steel first purchased was not a very inviting place. There were only about twenty-five acres cleared and there was much of it under water and very swampy. Nothing daunted by these conditions and the absence of any improvements, he tackled his hard proposition and conquered it. He was a skillful farmer and a practical man and in time cleared other acres and reclaimed the portion of the farm that was submerged by a system of ditching and tiling. Each year found him in more independent circumstances, and the latter years have brought him complete independence. His farm today is highly improved and is a fine example of what may be achieved through perseverance and honest effort. The resident occupied by Mr. Steel

and his family is of modern and most convenient type and his barns and outbuildings are well calculated to meet the purposes for which they were designed. Although this farm is not one of the largest in the township, it takes exceedingly high rank in the matters of productiveness and fertility.

During the years Mr. and Mrs. Steel struggled to make their home in the wilderness eight children came to bless their union. Of these seven are still living. The names of these children are: Mary S., Cora M., Rosa B., George C., Bessie A., wife of Homer Andrews; Celia F. and Earl E. Ezra died some years ago. All of the living children are at home with the exception of Rosa, who is married to Melvin Welker. The mother of these children, who was born August 6, 1848, died at the home of her husband, February 7, 1905.

However, Mr. Steel has found time for other business than that of farming. Eight years ago he took up the business of cement and stone work and has done work of this kind all over the county. He has done much work for the Standard Oil Company. He is a Democrat so far as politics are concerned, but it cannot be said that he is an active partisan. He and his family are numbered among the most highly respected people of the county, and he takes a live interest in all things that are slated to improve the condition of his county and state.

March 23, 1907, Mr. Steel was married a second time, when Mary M. Merryman became his wife. She is a native of Adams county, being a daughter of Zachariah Merryman.