

# LEAVES FROM A DIARY OF HON. E. J. HARDTNER OF PINEVILLE, LA.

I was born June 7th, 1844, at Lauffen on the Neckar river, Kingdom of Wurtemberg, Germany, the youngest of eleven children. My father's name was Simon Herinrich Hardtner, who was born on the 8th of December, 1803, and died on the 24th of December, 1894. At 25 years of age he married a mother, whose name was Klara Hartman of the celebrated Hartman family of Mainz. The wedding took place on the 8th day of August, 1828, in the well known Dom (Cathedral), one of the oldest Catholic churches in Germany, and was one of the great events of that early day. My father was early apprenticed as a shoemaker and soon became a journeyman, following his trade to Mainz, one of the oldest fortified cities on the River Rhine, and after his marriage moving to Lauffen in 1837, where he reared his family and continued his business. My grandfather's name was Melchior Hardtner, and my grandmother, Rosa Rebeckah Raithuber (farmers), living near the Schwarzwald (Black Forest). My mother died in 1850, when I was six years old, and well do I remember when I went with the others to the funeral and returning home missed mother so much, as I did ever afterward. The oldest of the eight children was sixteen and the youngest two years old, so father married again after getting a dispensation from the Consistory on account of the children needing the care of a mother. From that time also dates the hard struggle Germany had to pass through—first on account of the revolution and second because of seven years' failure of crops, when only bread and potatoes was to be had and that in limited quantities. At this time was built the first railroad from Heilbrun to Stuttgart, passing through Lauffen, completely upsetting the old

trip reached the city of New Orleans, in the flower state of the Union. Here is where one can live free and easy, and I joined in with the gay ones to get all there was out of life until I tired even of that and decided to go farther inland and finally located at Bastrop in Morehouse parish, where I found profitable work, good friends, a clean and hospitable people and a chance to make my way in the world. Here I commenced to learn to talk English, as there were few Germans to converse with, and after I had made a good start so that I could make myself understood, I applied myself more diligently and soon felt myself to be quite an English scholar, and as years rolled on and being associated only with English-speaking people, I lost command of the German language so that I carried on a conversation with difficulty. In July, 1867, I left Bastrop and went to New Orleans, I presume to spend the money I had saved up and have a gay time, never realizing the danger I was running into. Not only was the city in bad shape financially, but a terrible epidemic of yellow fever was raging, so I took a boat for the Lafourche landing at Thibodeaux, where I was looked upon with suspicion and went through much hardships on account of coming from an infected district, and finding poor welcome in several towns on the Mississippi, I finally got passage on a Red river boat which brought me to Alexandria on a Sunday morning in the beginning of October, where the yellow fever had preceded me or came with me, for a Mr. Swan died of fever a few days later. Alexandria did not present an inviting appearance, so I went over to Pineville on the steam ferryboat Aerial and found employment with a man by the name of Frank Etheridge, who had left the state of Arkansas on account of the KKK who were after

broke or in fear of trouble. So when I finally got on a Red river boat I felt like I was at home, and when I landed in Alexandria was welcomed like an old friend. On the ferryboat Capt. John Graham and William Morrison rushed up to me with a welcome as if I was their own brother, and Etheridge and his wife were everjoyed at having me with them once more. I was the lion of the town for a few days until I had met all old friends and recounted my adventures. Schwartzburg got out a bottle of his choicest wine covered all over with cobwebs, and with the girls we made merry, for the wanderer had returned.

At this time I had just \$5.00 left to my name, and I went to work with good will and intentions, and in ten weeks I had saved \$100.00. I soon became engaged to Miss Emma Schrader, whose parents had settled in Pineville about 1844, and on June 8th, 1869, we were married, just as I reached my twenty-fifth year. I was now a married man and assumed greater responsibilities with visions ahead for a career which I hoped would be honorable and successful. My work soon became more than I could take care of, so I sent for my brother, August, who after several months' stay went to Palestine, Texas, where he operated his own shop. Later on I took in my brother, Rudolph, as a partner in my business, which at this time, 1872, had grown to large proportions. In 1873 I sold out my interest and commenced a retail grocery in 1874. My first bill of goods was purchased from John I. Adams & Company of New Orleans for \$500.00, all the cash I had at that time, but I had a house and store building of my own and paid for, so I considered that this time I had a good beginning, but realized that it was quite a jump from tradesman to merchant. New responsibilities accumulated, but

work was not burdensome and I rather enjoyed it. I was associated in 1892 with J. M. Nugent in the lumber business, which lasted until 1896, the capital stock being \$5,000.00. In 1898 the Urania Lumber Company was chartered with a capital stock of \$20,000.00, most of which was paid for timber. This business has so far paid 100 per cent in stock and 85 per cent cash dividends and at this time is worth \$300,000. The Nugent, Hardtner & Company, Ltd., had paid 200 per cent dividends. The year 1904 was peculiar, having commenced with fires and other calamities, but ended with one of the best crops in history. Cotton, corn, sugar, rice, potatoes and grain brought good prices, especially grain. Lumber alone was depressed, but took a turn for the better after the election and was in fair shape at the beginning of 1905.

This is January 18, 1908, and I am just able to sit up and write a few lines to pass off the time. I went to the bank Wednesday, but had to leave about 11 a. m. and went right to bed until today, Saturday. The doctor says it is the grippe, a new name for influenza, but I know I am sick all over. The disease is generally prevalent and causing much discomfort and fatalities in some instances. I just heard that Henry is sick at Jena, I presume having exposed himself too much campaigning for division of Catahoula parish. I made a balance sheet for the year ending 1907 and find my business investments in good shape. All of my affairs are in good shape and there would be no confusion in case of my death. As it is, I do not know that I have ever wronged any one, but have worked for my family and society in general as best I could. Last year I attended the encampment of Knights Templars at Saratoga, N. Y., and then visited many

I am contented and can take things easier. Next June I will be 66 years old and must be more careful about eating and drinking. One after the other of my old friends are passing away to the land beyond, and I don't know how soon my time will be at hand, but I am prepared whenever I am called.

The year 1910 witnessed my greatest sorrow, for on September 12th my dear wife, Emma, was called to her maker. Her death was not unexpected, for she had been under treatment of specialists at various sanitariums for some time, but only temporary relief was the result, which prolonged the life of one so dear to me. At times it seems as if I must surrender and also pass away, for without a companion and helpmate life is indeed a dark and dreary one.

The children she raised are the best judges of the mother they lost, as they had profited and learned from her a just sense of duty to God and man, and to be honest, truthful and obedient to their parents—true children of the Lord. Mother died having all the loved ones kneeling at her bedside, partaking of the holy sacrament, and praying for the departing soul. We cherish her memory here and look forward to the time when we shall meet in the world beyond. Amen.

January, 1911. As representative of Oliver Lodge 84, F. & A. M., the chapter, council and commandery, I attended the Grand Lodge in New Orleans and had quite a pleasant time with the officers and brethren; thence to several towns in south Louisiana on a business mission for others. In March I spent some time in Hot