

George W. Merriman, banker, of Hartford, Mich., he is at present engaged as Cashier, though nearly seventy years of age. His family by his first marriage comprised five children, but three have been called to the silent land. The only surviving daughter, Agnes E., is the wife of William E. Thompson, of Plainwell. The father, who has been long identified with the Presbyterian Church, has been an Elder in the congregation for years.

Until he was nine years of age our subject lived in Paris and in Arcola, Ill., until 1869. He then came with his parents to Michigan, and was educated mainly in Plainwell. He continued to reside under the parental roof until he was eighteen years of age, when he started out to make his own livelihood. Entering the drug store owned in part by his step-brother, he was a clerk in that concern for a year. Then, going to Mancelona, he took charge of a store which he operated for nearly two years. For the next few months his home was in St. Ignace, Mich., after which, in the summer of 1881, he came to Cadillac and clerked in the store of R. J. Cummer & Co., druggists, until November, 1888. In the following year he purchased the business of A. E. Smith, and has since managed the same.

July 21, 1886, our subject married Mrs. Nancy L. Kelley, widow of William Kelley, and a daughter of George and Sarah (Hawley) Van Ness. By her previous marriage she had three children: Edwin H., Edith M. and Helen A. Two children have blessed the union of Mr. and Mrs. Van Vranken, namely: G. Garrett and Marguerite Agnes. The parents are members of the Presbyterian Church, and our subject served for three years in the office of Elder. In politics he is a supporter of the Republican party.

Eldert Van Vranken, the paternal grandfather of George D., was a native of New York State, born near Schenectady about 1785, and of Dutch descent, his father being a Hollander. Eldert Van Vranken followed farming during his lifetime, and, possessing a hardy constitution, lived to the ripe old age of ninety-one. He was a man of strong religious tendency, but on account of deafness did not attend church to any great extent. His family comprised only two sons and two daughters, both

of whom died young. Capt. Dennison Fox, the father of Mrs. Laura Van Vranken, was born in Connecticut, and was of English origin. He won his title in the War of 1812. He was an agriculturist, and died while yet in the prime of life.



ALMON B. C. COMSTOCK. The early settlers of Northern Michigan, through unremitting toil and great hardship, through sacrifices and dangers, have made possible the degree of prosperity the people now enjoy, and to them the gratitude of posterity is due. Among those sturdy pioneers who have been identified with the history of this locality from its dawn to the present time, we mention the name of Mr. Comstock, who has the distinction of having engaged in business for a longer period than any resident of Otsego County.

At the time of his settlement in Gaylord, this now thriving village contained but a few inhabitants, and the streets were covered with trees and stumps. There was little in its appearance to interest the casual observer, but with the foresight of the pioneer, he discerned the possibilities that lay hidden in its future. Commencing his work with energy, he removed the stumps from a lot in the village, prepared the site for the erection of a building, and in a short time opened up a hardware store. This he has since conducted with gratifying success. In 1892, associated with Quick Bros., he established the Otsego County Bank, which is now upon a solid financial basis, and enjoys the confidence of the people. In connection with the same gentlemen, he has also dealt extensively in horses for a number of years.

The son of Levi and Elizabeth (Billings) Comstock, our subject was born in Milwaukee, Wis., August 11, 1851. At the age of four years he was taken by his mother to Canada, and there he spent the seven ensuing years, after which the family removed to Michigan. His mother died in May-

ville, Tuscola County, this state. He had one brother and three sisters, who when last heard from lived in New Zealand. After some years spent in attendance at the common schools, he began to learn the tinner's trade at North Branch, and later was similarly engaged at Mayville and Unionville, Mich.

In 1875 Mr. Comstock was united in marriage with Miss Hattie Lock, a native of Canada, and they are the parents of a son, Arthur B., and a daughter, Carrie E. In his political faith, Mr. Comstock is an unswerving Republican, and upon the ticket of his party he has been chosen to serve in a number of important capacities. He has represented his township upon the County Board of Supervisors, has also served as a member of the School and Poor Boards, was for a time Township Treasurer, and also filled out an unexpired term as County Treasurer. In his business transactions he is methodical and exact, and besides being the owner of a valuable hardware store, he also owns a number of farms situated near Gaylord. Socially he is actively connected with Gaylord Lodge No. 366, A. F. & A. M., and for the past six years has served as its Master.

Such is a brief history of Mr. Comstock. His career is full of encouragement to the poor young man starting out in life. The sequel of his success shows how, with industry, perseverance and economy, guided by correct principles, a man may attain a competence and an influential position among his fellow-citizens.



JAMES S. CANAAN. Among the officials of Mecosta County who make their home in Big Rapids, we find no one who is more deservedly popular, on account both of character and long acquaintance, than the County Clerk and Register in Chancery, whose name introduces this biographical notice. Besides being personally a man whose integrity, intelligence and fitness for office render him eligible for such a position, he has the additional advantage of having served the

country in its hour of need, and during the late Rebellion periled his life in defense of the Union.

Though a resident of Michigan much of his life, Mr. Canaan spent his early childhood years in Kenton, Ohio, where his birth occurred July 12, 1844. At the age of ten he went to Iowa in company with his parents, Jehu and Sarah L. (Scott) Canaan, and settled in Vinton, where the next seven years were spent. In his boyhood school and farm work were shared, with the balance in favor of the latter, for at that time there was much to be done to put the land in a productive state, and labor was not easily procured.

After seven years spent in Iowa, Mr. Canaan returned to Ohio and spent one year in Kenton. He then, in August, 1862, enlisted as a member of Company B, One Hundred and Eighteenth Ohio Infantry, Col. Samuel Mott commanding the regiment. From that time until the close of the war he was engaged in active service in the Union army. The first year was spent in Kentucky, and thence he marched with his regiment to Knoxville, Tenn., where he was stationed during the siege, in the winter of 1863-64. In April, 1864, he entered upon the Atlanta campaign. He had been absent from his regiment upon a sick furlough, and rejoined the command the day after McPherson was killed.

From that time until the fall of Hood, Mr. Canaan was with General Thomas, and while at Columbia, Franklin and Nashville was under fire for eight days and nights. After Hood's forces were dispersed, he was sent to North Carolina, joining Sherman at Goldsboro and being under that General at the time of Johnston's surrender. His regiment was stationed at Salisbury, N. C., at the time of discharge, June 26, 1865, under a general order. During his three years of active service, he took an active part in eight pitched battles, besides a number of skirmishes, and in the hour of danger he was always to be found at the front, doing all he could to promote the success of the Union.

The hardship of battle and the exposure incident to army life affected Mr. Canaan so seriously that for fourteen months after his return to Kenton, Ohio, he was unable to engage in any business whatever, his constitution having been impaired