John Kleim

THE YOUNGER, A.D. 1770

ACCOUNT

OF THE

KEIM FAMILY.

By HENRY MAY KEIM.

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No. ....

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THE Keim family were originally from that portion of Alsace bordering on the Rhine, and were principally physicians and engineers until the "Thirty Years' War," when every man took up arms, and, at least one member of the family, Ludwig Hercourt Keim, became a distinguished officer in the army of Bernhard of Weimer, the pupil of Gustavus Adolphus. This long and disastrous war, with its consequent calamities, scattered the family and nearly exterminated them, when John Keim, the elder, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, to obtain freedom of conscience, moved to the "new country of America," and eventually, in 1704, passed up the "Germantown Valley" and settled in Oley, now in the county of Berks, a French Huguenot settlement "remarkable in the annals of Pennsylvania." Here he took up land, lived a quiet life, and died, beloved by the whole settlement, in 1732. His son Nicholas, born in Oley on the second of April, 1719, moved, with Barbara his wife and their only son John, a lad in his sixth year, to Reading, during the November term of court, 1755. Berks County was separated from Philadelphia and other Counties in 1752. The town of Reading was laid out by Thomas and Richard Penn, in 1748, and in 1749 had but one house in it. When it became the county town of a new county, many of the well-to-do people in the different townships took up their residence there, until in 1757, it contained two hundred and three taxable inhabitants. After a successful career as an iron merchant, Nicholas Keim handed the business over to his son John, and on the twenty-third of August, 1802, died at the advanced age of eighty-three years, "after a long lingering consumption which he bore with Christian fortitude and entire devotion to the will of the Almighty."* He was a man who practiced a rigid morality, and was a constant student of everything relative to the temporal and spiritual welfare of those around him. He was also an

* Weekly Advertiser, 28 Aug., 1802.

anxious inquirer after truth, and many knotty questions did he introduce at the meetings of the old burghers, under the aged buttonwood trees on North Callowhill—now Fifth—street, nearly a century and a quarter ago, where gatherings were regularly held, and where "the great goodness and royal bounty of her late majesty Queen Anne" were commended, the Indian wars were discussed, and where almost every project for the good of the citizens originated and nearly as often ended.

John Keim, only son of Nicholas, was born on the sixth of July, 1749. On the fifteenth of October, 1771, he was married to Susanna, daughter of Dr. George de Benneville.* In the fall of 1777, he marched with Lt. Colonel Nicholas Lutz's Battalion of Pennsylvania Militia to reinforce the Army under General Washington. Reading at that time was the base of the Continental Army. Hemmed in on all sides by lofty hills and the Schuylkill River it was a place easy of defence. A large quantity of military stores had been collected there, and as General Howe intended capturing these, Washington, after the battle of the Brandywine, left Philadelphia to its fate, and took position at Pottsgrove on the Schuylkill, seventeen miles below Reading. The British then occupied Philadelphia. After Washington had received reinforcements, early on the morning of the fourth of October, 1777, he attacked the British position at Germantown, was repulsed, and eventually on the eleventh of December, 1777, he went into winter quarters at Valley Forge. Many of the Berks County troops shed their blood for their country on the field of Germantown.

Like his father, John Keim was a man of stern integrity. He studied with delight the ethical writers of England, Germany and France, and was rigid in his efforts to promote virtue by well doing and a simplicity of life. He took a great interest in everything relative to the prosperity of the borough and county. He was one of the Burgesses of Reading after its incorporation into a borough in 1783, and was elected Commissioner of Berks County from 1787 to 1790. He died on the tenth of February, 1819, and probably the best tribute to his

* See Appendix.

memory was an obituary notice published in the Berks and Schuylkill Journal of Reading, from which we make the following extract:

"Will be interred in the Episcopal burial ground, this afternoon at two o'clock, the remains of Mr. John Keim, merchant, who departed this life on Wednesday morning last, in the seventieth year of his age. He had resided in this borough for sixty-four years, during which time he amassed a large fortune, which never caused a widow's tear or orphan's execration.

* * * * * * * * *

What he has left behind him was justly his own. As a creditor he was ever lenient, and his numerous tenantry can testify to his goodness as a landlord."

John Keim left four children: Daniel deB., George deB., Benneville and Esther deB. Keim.

Daniel deB. Keim was born at Reading, on the eighth of September, 1772. At the age of twenty-two years he raised and commanded the "Reading Union Volunteers," a company that marched, under General Henry Lee, to quell the rebellion in Western Pennsylvania called the "Whisky Insurrection."

He left an interesting diary of this short campaign. Washington, then President of the United States, accompanied the expedition in person. Captain Keim was also a veteran of the "Second War of Independence." The following extract taken from the *Weekly Advertiser*, of the twenty-fourth of September, 1814, relates in a quaint way the departure of his command for the field:

"On the sixteenth of September, in the afternoon, Captain Daniel deB. Keim marched his company, the Reading Washington Guards, for the defence of Philadelphia. Col. Simon's band of music escorted them to the Schuylkill, where they took boats. When the company was paraded to march, Captain Keim formed them in a circle, and the Rev. J. F. Grier, delivered to them an appropriate and pious oration. Great praise is due to Captain Keim in raising and disciplining this corps, and when we consider that in less than fifteen days a full company was raised, uniformed and equipped, and marched, we cannot in justice refrain from expressing our admiration of the gallantry and patriotism of the young men who composed it."

The services of the "Reading Washington Guards" not being required at Philadelphia, they were ordered to other points and remained in service until the close of the war.

Captain Keim was also the organizer and first commander of the "Reading Artillerists," and he succeded in procuring for them from the National Government, a battery of very fine field pieces, that had been captured at Yorktown. This corps has a history as creditable as it is interesting. It was present, under its founder, in Philadelphia in 1824, when Lafayette was received as the nation's guest. It fought through the war with Mexico, and during the Great Rebellion was in active service—making for itself, wherever placed, a record for gallantry and valor.

Captain Keim took a great interest in local antiquities, and a sketch of the "Primitive settlement and early history of Reading," written by him, appeared in the Ladies' Garland for February, 1839. He died during the same year.

Benneville Keim was born in Reading on the thirtieth of November, 1790, and during a long and well-spent life he occupied many positions of prominence and trust. He was a member of the firm of Keims, Whitaker & Co., that in 1836 built the nail works and rolling mill in the southern portion of Reading. He was for many years President of the Farmers' Bank and the Reading Water Company, and, in 1846, was appointed one of the original Trustees of the "Charles Evans Cemetery." In connection with his brother, George deB. Keim, he took a great interest in the Colonization Society of Pennsylvania, and presided at a public meeting held in its behalf, in the Borough of Reading, on the twenty-seventh of July, 1835.

In 1858 he was elected Mayor of the City of Reading, and he continued in office for three consecutive terms.

He died on the thirtieth of October, 1872, at the ripe age of eighty-two years.

Esther deB. Keim, only daughter of John Keim, was born in Reading, on the twenty-third of March, 1774, and died unmarried on the seventh of December, 1830. Full of good works, the old people of Reading to this day speak of her many deeds of good-will and charity. Her heart and means went out for the encouragement of every act, or the support of every association that elevated the condition of her fellow-men, or

contributed to their happiness. Elegant in appearance, refined and lovely in disposition, her dignified presence carried with it a charm that never was forgotton, and the memory of "Good Aunt Esther" still lingers.

George deB. Keim was born at Reading, on the sixteenth of December, 1778. He was sent to school, when quite young, in the Friends' old Meeting House, situated on what was then Thomas Street, near Queen. He was taken into the iron business by his father, in 1798, and continued with him until 1803, when his father retired, leaving the business to his sons. On the fourth of February, 1799, he was married to Mary May, daughter of James May, a prominent citizen of Reading, and his wife Bridget Douglas, formerly of Douglassville, Berks County. He extended his interests largely, until he became either sole or part owner of the Reading Furnace, Schuylkill Furnace, Charming Forge, Susan Forge and Little Schuylkill Forge.

In 1809 he entered into a co-partnership with William Allibone, of Philadelphia, in the buying and selling of breadstuffs, and in exporting largely to the port of Liverpool. This firm was dissolved by mutual consent in 1814, on account of the condition of things produced by the war with England. General Keim was in Philadelphia engaged in settling up the affairs of the firm, when peace was declared, and the following extract from a letter written to him by his wife, showing how the dawn of peace was celebrated in Reading, will be interesting:

READING, February 23, 1815.

MY DEAR HUSBAND:

With pleasure did I peruse your affectionate epistle, and the prepartions for last night's illumination have alone prevented my answering it sooner. As the wife of a true American, I felt disposed to enter patriotically into it, and I exhibited a few emblematic pieces from my chamber windows, which attracted crowds of gazers, who by loud shouts evinced their admiration of our house, which was said to excel all the others. But to do justice to the people, the town was brilliantly lighted up, and the utmost order prevailed during the early part of the evening. But we unfortunately have two classes of beings; one who considered it a day of privilege, and not even the blessedness of peace to our country could restrain them. By this the Laws of Heaven are violated, the peace of society broken, religious duties and morality ridiculed. Vice alone

ruled, and this urged them to destroy a great deal of harmony by breaking windows, lamps, etc.

With what different sensations of gratitude did I hail the arrival of peace. May we in future ever be blest with a continuance of it. May Heaven still watch over us and guide us through the tumultuous changes of our country, and finally protect us from a second war.

* * * * * * * * *

Yours, affectionately,

MARY KEIM.

General Keim was a Burgess of Reading, and President of the Town Council for a number of years. and was one of the founders of the Reading Water Company in 1822. He was an officer of the society for "Promoting Inland Navigation, Turnpikes, &c.," and was particularly active in aiding the building of those great ways by road and water that even before the days of the iron horse made Reading an important point in Pennsylvania.

In 1825, General Keim had launched at Keim's Basin in the "Port of Reading," as it was called at the time, the first passenger packet built on the Schuylkill. It was called the Charles Chauncey. The year after it was followed by the DeWitt Clinton. Both boats were elegantly finished inside and out. They navigated the Schuylkill and Union Canals, after these important works were finished, and many private excursions given by General Keim are remembered to this day by some of the elderly people of Reading, who as children had taken part in them.

The navigation of the Schuylkill having destroyed the shad fisheries, by reason of the dams preventing the migration of the fish from the sea, General Keim thought to make up the deficiency by stocking it with land-locked Salmon, so in June, 1834, after great care and considerable expense, he placed in the river at Reading, several thousand live salmon. They did not seem to thrive however, as but few of them were ever afterwards caught.

General Keim was for a long series of years one of the Board of Trustees of the Reading Academy, incorporated in 1796, and he also aided in the establishment of the Reading Female

Seminary, a well-managed institutute that in its day acquired considerable celebrity. He was President of the "Youths and Apprentices' Library," when in 1836 it made the great effort in union with the "Pennsylvania Lyceum of Philadelphia" to establish Lyceums in every borough and township in the state. For over thirty years he was President of the Branch Bank of Pennsylvania, established at Reading, and was Vice President for Berks County of the Geological Society of Pennsylvania, of which John B. Gibson, of Philadelphia, was President.

General Keim took a lively interest in the development of Schuylkill County, the daughter of Berks, separated from her in 1811, and no one in the early history of the anthracite coal interests did more for them. He was among the first projectors of the Little Schuylkill Railroad and Navigation Company, the Mount Carbon, the Mine Hill and Schuylkill Haven Railroads, and was one of the incorporators and most active supporters of the Reading Railroad, a corporation whose reputation has since become world-wide, and whose success is only commensurate with its greatness.

The early completion of the Reading Railroad suggested the feasibility of procuring at Reading the establishment of a National Foundry, the building of which had been agitated in Congress. A large meeting of the citizens of Reading was held in March, 1838, with this object in view, at which meeting General Keim was appointed the Chairman of a committee to present a memorial to Congress, and in connection with Henry A. Muhlenberg and John Ritter, visited Washington to urge the claims of Reading.

General Keim was a warm personal and political friend of Govenor Joseph Hiester, and in 1821 he was appointed by him an aid on his staff, with the rank of Colonel. In 1830 he was elected Major General of the Sixth Division P. M., composed of the counties of Berks, Schuylkill, Lebanon and Dauphin, succeeding his brother-in-law, the Hon. Samuel D. Franks, then President Judge of the Dauphin, Lebanon and Schuylkill District. His opponent was the Hon. Simon Cameron, who for

so many years has represented Pennsylvania in the National Councils.

General Keim was during his whole life a warm advocate of protection to home manufactures. He was a member of the General Convention of the friends of Domestic Industry, that assembled at New-York on the twenty-sixth of October, 1831, and, as one of the committee "On the product and manufacture of iron and steel," presented an exhaustive report on the subject, which to-day is invaluable to those who study the progress our country has made in this branch of trade.

General Keim was a philanthropist. Benevolent in the highest degree, and a lover of his fellow men, his constant thought was how to alleviate their sufferings, or how to improve their condition.

During the summer of 1818, a number of negroes escaped from slavery in New Jersey, and after many trials and vicissitudes arrived in Reading, worn down, sick and needy. General Keim attended to all their wants, and procured them permanent situations in Reading and its neighborhood. On 12th month, 3d, 1818, at a meeting of the "Pennsylvania Society for promoting the abolition of slavery," etc., held in Philadelphia, a series of resolutions conveying the thanks of the Society to George deB. Keim, of Reading, "for his humane and disinterested services," were unanimously passed and transmitted to him, with a flattering letter from the President, W. Rawle, and the Secretary, Benjamin Williams.

In 1819, General Keim was instrumental in organizing the Bible Society of Berks County, as auxiliary to the Bible Society of Philadelphia, and was its manager for many years. He was also President of the Reading Branch of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. He was for a long time Senior Warden and a Vestryman of Christ Episcopal Parish, of Reading, and, with other members of his family, gave largely of his time and means towards the erection of a Parish Church.

During the distress produced in Reading by the panic of 1836–37, General Keim headed every movement that would in any way relieve the wants of the community. In February,

1836, he presided at a town meeting "to take into consideration the situation of the unprovided parts of the community." Several means of relief were adopted, and during the following winter, he was chairman of a committee, appointed by the "Garrick Dramatic Association," to get up a series of performances for the benefit of the poor, at which a creditable amount was realized.

General Keim died on the twentieth of August, 1852, aged seventy-three years, beloved and honored—his faithful wife surviving him for nearly a year. He left his impress on the generation in which he lived, and he, probably more than any other man, started his native town on that career of progress that has placed her in the front rank of American inland cities.

He had three sons: John M., George M. and Daniel M. Keim; and four daughters: Ann, Susannah, Catharine and Rebecca, all of which children are dead, except the latter, Mrs. Wirt Robinson, of Richmond, Virginia. We will take from this group a representative member of the family, George M., the second son, and give a concise account of his life.

George May Keim was born in Reading on the twenty-third of March, 1805. At an early age he was sent to "Bently Hall," the school of Joshua Hoopes, at Downingtown, Chester County, after which he went to Princeton College. He studied law with Charles Chauncey, Esq., of Philadelphia, and on his motion, and the favorable report of William Grinnell, William Rawle, Jr., Thomas J. Wharton and David Paul Brown, Esqs., he was admitted to practice, on the fifth of June, 1826, in the several courts of Philadelphia County. Returning to Reading, he became Cashier of the Farmers' Bank of Reading, under the Presidency of his uncle, Benneville Keim. On the first of May, 1827, he was married by the Rev. Dr. Bedell, Rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, of Philadelphia, to Julia C., youngest daughter of the late Christopher Mayer, of Lancaster, who represented his county for a number of years in the State Senate.

In 1829 General Keim became a commissioner, afterwards a manager of the Mill Creek and Mine Hill Navigation and

Railroad Company. At an early age he was made a manager of the Reading Library Company, and took a great interest in its prosperity. In 1830 he was elected Captain of the old corps of the "Reading Artillerists," succeeding his uncle, Captain Daniel deB. Keim, and shortly after was elected Colonel of the Fifty-third Regiment P. M. The same year he occupied the position of District Deputy Grand Master of the Ancient York Masons, having previously been Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 62, of Reading. In 1835 he was elected Major-General of the Sixth Division P. M., consisting of the counties of Berks, Schuylkill, Lebanon and Dauphin, succeeding his father, General George deB. Keim.

General Keim about this time began an investigation into the geology and mineralogy of his native State. A large and choice cabinet of minerals, which included specimens from different portions of the known world, was the result of his painstaking and studious work. After his death, this cabinet was presented by his children to "The Lehigh University" at South Bethlehem, founded by Hon. Asa Packer. An archæological collection of Indian relics, principally from central Pennsylvania, was also presented by his children to the Smithsonian Institution, at Washington, D. C.

In 1835 General Keim, as one of the firm of Keims, Whitaker & Co., aided in the erection of a large rolling mill and nail factory in Reading. This was the pioneer establishment of all those great works that have since made Reading a large manufacturing city. He was also, as was his brother, the late Major Daniel M. Keim, a member of the firm of Jones, Keim & Co., proprietors of Windsor Furnace, which firm became celebrated for its fine castings made directly from the ore. The following extract published November, 1834, in the *Commercial Herald*, of Philadelphia, shows the attention these castings attracted in that city:

"The Last Supper, after Leonardo da Vinci, made at Windsor Furnace, by Jones, Keim & Co., has been presented to the Philadelphia Exchange by Captain Daniel M. Keim. This copy was cast directly from the ore in common sand, and oiled. This firm was the first to attempt and bring to perfection castings of this description. Many of our public institutions are in possession of their taste and skill."

In 1837 General Keim was elected one of the delegates from Berks County to the Convention to revise the Constitution of Pennsylvania. He was attentive to his duties and energetic in his efforts to serve the people. His speech on the Banking question attracted approval throughout the State. He was one of the committee of nine appointed by the Convention, among whom were John Sergeant, Charles Chauncey, Thaddeus Stevens and George W. Woodward, who during the recess in August, 1837, issued an address relative to the ways and means necessary "to promote the cause of Common School education and the general diffusion of useful knowledge, together with the industry and pecuniary prosperity of Pennsylvania."

In the fall of 1837, General Keim was elected to Congress from the Berks District, to fill the unexpired term of the Hon. H. A. Muhlenberg, and was twice re-elected. While in Congress, he showed great industry and was always found in his place. From the day in which he took his seat up to the time when, as General of one of the divisions of the Pennsylvania Militia, called out by Governor Ritner to march to Harrisburg, he lost but one vote when the ayes and nays were called, and that was on an unimportant subject.

General Keim was very quick and strong in debate, and the set-to that he and Tom. Marshall, of Kentucky, had with John Quincy Adams, in the twenty-seventh Congress, on the petition presented by the latter, praying for the dissolution of the Union, will long be remembered in the annals of Congress. It was aptly described by an eye-witness, the Hon. Joshua R. Giddings, of Ohio, in his lecture on "The Union," delivered by him in different parts of the country prior to the Rebellion.

The friends of General Keim, contrary to his earnest protestations, presented his name for the speakership of the Twenty-Sixth Congress, and he received a complimentary vote, notwithstanding the caucus nomination. In 1842 he wrote a letter declining a renomination for Congress, in which he said "I trust it is scarcely necessary after having served you for many years to assure you that your advantage has always been first in my affections. Where that has been the question, it

would have been ungrateful in me to have permitted any personal considerations to turn me aside from it. The zeal for the common benefit which is the duty of every public man, impelled me to any sacrifice indispensable to its promotion.

"Of my public career it scarcely becomes me to speak. When first chosen as your representative, my personal affairs were prosperous, in serving you they were neglected, and I have the consolation to know that my return to you will not be chided by any intimations of selfish interests or personal aggrandizement."

It was while General Keim was in Congress that Charles Dickens made his first visit to this country, and he presided at a Congressional dinner that was given to him in March, 1842, when some of the most distinguished men of the day in politics and letters greeted the author of "Pickwick."

Washington in those days contained many men who, though not only celebrated in the arenas of the "United Service" or politics, were highly accomplished in everything that appertains to the refinements of life. The national seat of government had seldom seen a more brilliant coterie than that which made it so attractive nearly forty years ago.

Beside F. S. Key, the author of the "Star Spangled Banner" and John Howard Payne, the author of "Home, Sweet Home," there were John Quincy Adams, justly proud of his poetical fancies, J. K. Paulding, Secretary of the Navy, Alexander Dimitry, the writer of sweet songs, J. G. Bruff, C. Cushing of Massachusetts, General William O. Butler of Kentucky, E. Kingman, B. B. French, I. E. Holmes of South Carolina, F. W. Thomas, the author, and R. W. Meade of the Navy. All these men wrote poetry, but they wrote simply for their own pleasure and the delight of a charmed circle, beyond whose limits their effusions were seldom seen. With these and others, not forgetting Mrs. Ann S. Stevens, then in the zenith of her fame, all of whom have left a trace, however slight, upon the literature of the age, General Keim would often meet, and some of his modest effusions fell upon the ears of ready listeners. After his death, a number of his fugitive

verses were published anonymously—this best befitting his well known desire in the matter.

General Keim had a happy faculty of improvising, and upon different occasions his talent in this respect was successfully brought out. The following extract from the *New York Herald* will give an instance. A Washington correspondent of that paper during the Spring of 1840, says he had hoped to have sent the album verses by John Quincy Adams, but that his attention in this department had been drawn in a different direction:

"The verses sent were by General George M. Keim, of Pennsylvania. They were drawn forth, I am told, by a sort of challenge upon the improvisatorial power in poetry. A certain brother member insisted to Keim that the talent was confined to Italy, that it never had and never could be exercised in our language. "What think you then," replied the General, "of Theodore Hook, in England, who can make a song while he is singing it, embodying a droll description and character of every listener."

"Can he?"

"Yes; and though, as a British wag said, there is some difference between *Hook and I*, I think I can jingle rhyme as fast—as fast at any rate—as you can invent a subject for it."

"Done; I'll try you."

"Agreed; let's have a glass of wine and go to work."

The wine was produced, and the antagonist of the General began his story and went on as follows:

"The craftiness of Catharine de Medici is proverbial. Born in Florence, she there imbibed the obliquities of Machaivelian policy which then prevailed in Italy, and which she carried with her to France. She was married to Henry, son of Francis the First. From her unbounded ambition she sacrificed France and her children to the passion for power. The death of her husband, Henry II. left her supreme. Then it was that the greatest extravagancies, the most cruel murders were committed, either at her suggestion, or with her connivance. Although a niece of Pope Clement VII., yet fearing the influence of Mary Stuart, who was married to her eldest son, she decided to favor the Protestants, and instructed a confidant to whom she was much devoted to prepare the way by an open recantation of the Roman Catholic faith before the assembled court. To this he tacitly assented, but when the moment arrived, he burst upon them with a strain of unsurpassed eloquence for the religion of France and the Pope, which had scarcely passed his lips before he was murdered. This then not unusual crime was perpetrated at the instance of Catharine by one of her new favorites, who consequently reveled in the smiles and honours of the great."

The time occupied in the concoction of the narrative was noted, whereupon General George M. Keim began his task, taking a sip of wine between each

verse, and completing the whole within the time bestowed upon the prose, the improvisatorial versification of which ran as follows, under the title of

"THE FATED ONE:"

I.

I mark'd his glowing countenance amid the joyous throng,—
His spirit danc'd more buoyantly than e'er did minstrel's song,—
Smiles greeted whereso'er he went—the cynosure was he
Of highest hopes and warmest hearts that beat rejoicingly!

II.

What strain of fervid eloquence now falls upon the ear?
'Twas his, in freedom's holy fane,—and ours the boon to hear,
Prophetic sounds are utter'd there,—they breathe a magic spell,—
The theme is of his native land, a land he lov'd too well.

III.

His was a pure and holy zeal, which dwelt in burning tone,
On other and on nobler times, when great exploits were done,—
It touched the anxious listener with truths she only knew,
Whose conscience sear'd with darkest deeds, still darker deeds pursue.

IV.

But there is one whose sullen gloom bespeaks a dastard's part,
His haggard brow is branded with the baseness of his heart,
He lurks beneath the corridor, yet, with remorseless thrill,
His inmost heart is echoing the note of horror still.

V.

Revenge gleamed from his threatening eye on the devoted youth,
Who dar'd sustain his family faith with fearlessness and truth,
He fell without a single pang, yet, with his latest sigh,
Exclaim'd, "For thee, my much-lov'd land, for thee resigned I die."

VI.

And where is he whose vengeful steel has done the miscreant deed?
Amid the gay unfeeling throng he wears the honour'd meed!
The compeer of patrician birth, the Knight of lady fair,
Who jesting greets the widow's grief—the orphan's silent tear."

"Well, I cannot say but the General gained his battle gloriously."

While in Washington, General Keim took an active interest in the organization of the "National Institution for the promotion of science," presided over by the Hon. Joel R. Poinsett, Secretary of War, and the Hon. Jas. K. Paulding, Secretary of

the Navy. He also continued to indulge his taste in art as well as science, and while on the Committee on Public Buildings, first brought to notice the Sculptor, Ferdinand Pettrich, a pupil of Thorwaldsen, whose decorations on the national buildings of that day, do not cease to be attractive. Pettrich's "Fisher Girl," acknowledged at the time by critics and the press to be unexcelled in this country as a work of art, found a purchaser in General Keim.

After General Keim's retirement from Congress, he was offered by President Tyler one of three positions, either Minister to Brazil, Governor of Wisconsin Territory, or United States Marshal of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. He chose the latter, because he could then remain near home. He was re-appointed to this position by President Polk in 1844. In 1847 he was elected President of the "Liberty Union," of which William H. Horstman, of Philadelphia, was Treasurer. Its object was to "circulate general political knowledge abroad, and to afford information of whatever pertains to the political organization of the United States, and the nature and quality of our institutions."

General Keim at this time became one of the managers of the Art Union of Philadelphia, "for the promotion of the Arts of Design in the United States," an association that in its day made some highly creditable contributions to American art. He early in life became a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

In 1848 a strong movement was made, both in the eastern and western parts of the State, to nominate General Keim for Governor, and large meetings were held in the Northern Liberties, of Philadelphia, and in other sections, with this object in view. He wrote a letter, however, to a Reading paper, in which he positively declined being a candidate. Shortly after, he retired to private life, and sought the attractions and comforts of his old home in Reading.

"It is the universal opinion,—said Col. John W. Forney of the "*Pennsylvanian*,"—that no officer of the late administration has rendered more satisfaction in the discharge of his duties

than General Keim. He was a great favorite with the court and all its officers, and *we* know his departure is deeply regretted by both the distinguished United States Judges. Personally and politically his popularity is abiding, for all who have ever met, esteem and respect him."

In 1852 General Keim was elected by the City Councils, Mayor of Reading, to succeed Major George Getz, who died while in office.

He always took a lively interest in everything relative to agriculture, and was one of the first persons in the county of Berks who introduced imported thoroughbred cattle within its borders. He aided in the establishment of the Berks County Agricultural Society, and delivered the address at their first annual meeting held on the twenty-eighth of October, 1852. He was elected the second President of the Society, succeeding Dr. John P. Hiester, and continued in the position for several years, giving largely of his time and means towards the success of what has always been one of the most successful Agricultural Associations in the United States. It was during General Keim's administration—thirteenth of May, 1854—that the County Commissioners of Berks County leased to the Society for ninety-nine years, the large and valuable property at the foot of Mount Penn, within the city limits, known as "The Commons," where the exhibitions have been subsequently held. He at different times made a number of agricultural addresses in different portions of the State, which were full of sound common sense. He advanced principles for the farmer to follow, deducted from practice and his own experiments, and was not given to untried theories, often pretty only in their conception, but of no earthly importance in their results.

On the twelfth of May, 1857, General Keim met with a misfortune from which he never fully recovered—the loss of his wife. This sainted woman, so lovely and refined, had indeed been to him a help-mate, and often when the battle of life waged the fiercest, she would be in her closet on her knees, praying for the success of him whom she loved. On the first of May, the anniversary of their wedding-day, he received from his dying

wife, "The last bouquet," and this last bouquet, consecrated by earnest and impassioned words of prayer and love, was guarded by him during the remainder of his life with as much zealous devotion as the Holy Grail would have been by the Christian Knight, had he possessed it.

The last public position that General Keim occupied was that of first Elector at Large on the Democratic Presidential Ticket of 1860.

When the great rebellion broke out, General Keim—unmindful of approaching age and physical infirmity—raised a large and efficient company of volunteers for home defence. He was exceedingly active and enthusiastic in drilling and preparing them for actual duty, and one of the last acts of his life was to head with his name a paper, offering the services of his company to the government. This intense labor and excitement caused his death. He was stricken with paralysis in the armory at the Odd Fellows' Hall, while preparing to drill his company, and was carried home insensible. He died calmly and peaceably, surrounded by those he loved, on the evening of the tenth of June, 1861. As he had often expressed a wish to be laid down in the grave with the sinking sun, he was buried at six o'clock P. M., on Wednesday, the twelfth of June, with the service of the Episcopal Church, of which he was a member, and with military honors.

Six children survived him: George deBenneville, Charles Wetherill, Henry May, Julia Mayer, Susan Douglas and Mary May.

The *Reading Times* of the day following, in its obituary notice and account of the funeral, truthfully said:

> "Fifth street, from Spruce to the city line, was literally thronged with people anxious to see the last of the man they loved and respected, and the funeral cortege embraced those who mourned his life as irreparable."

He seemed to have had a presentiment of death for some time, and had "put his house in order." Appropriately might be quoted in his case the following sentence from his speech in Congress on announcing the death of his colleague from Penn-

sylvania, William W. Potter: "To him, however, death presented no terror, but like a welcome harbinger of rest, he was hailed with cordial greeting."

We close this sketch with an extract from an obituary notice written by the Hon. J. Lawrence Getz, of the "*Gazette and Democrat*," ex-member of Congress from Berks County:

"Although General Keim was during the greater part of his life eminently a public man, it was in his private and social relations that his best traits of character were displayed. Genial in his manners, kindly in his sympathies, generous in his disposition, and warm in his attachments, he attracted around him many friends who learned to know and appreciate him, as those who had but a superficial acquaintance with him could not do. His house was the abode of hospitality; his door was always open to the rich and poor, friend and stranger alike, and no one ever crossed his threshold who did not meet a hearty welcome. His charities were liberal and even munificent, and never withheld from any worthy object, whether individual or associative. The poor of our city always found in him a friend and benefactor. Our churches, our schools, our fire companies, our military organizations, and all our institutions of benevolence and philanthropy were the recipients of his bounty, which was freely and largely bestowed. He was a liberal patron of the Fine Arts, and not a few young artists, struggling in poverty and obscurity experienced the benefit of his counsel and encouragement. The collection of paintings and statuary which embellishes his homestead is large and valuable, and embraces many pieces of rare merit that attest his nice taste, and the discriminating liberality with which he cultivated it. His knowledge of men and books was extensive, and made him as a conversationalist an entertaining and instructive companion.

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In this brief memoir of one who has been for so long a time identified with our city and county, and whose public services and private virtues entitled him to so large a share of the regard of their people, we have sought not to be his eulogist, but to speak of him as he was. Of his cotemporaries who have gone before him, one after another, to the land of spirits, it has frequently been written, "In his death we mourn the loss of a friend and associate whose place may not easily be filled." But never were these words more truly applied than to our departed townsman—George May Keim. "Peace to his memory."

William High Keim was the son of Benneville Keim and his wife, Mary High, of "Poplar Neck," near Reading. He was born at Reading, on the thirteenth of June, 1813. At the age of twelve he entered the "Mount Airy Military School," then under the charge of Colonel A. L. Roumfort and Major B. B. Constant, and graduated in 1829. In 1836 he was

married to Lucy Jane Randolph, daughter of Colonel Beverley Randolph, of Front Royal, Virginia, and his wife Maria Mayer. When not yet seventeen years of age, he became orderly sergeant of the "Washington Grays," then under the command of his cousin, Captain Daniel M. Keim, and when he took command of the corps in 1837, the "Washington Grays of Reading" was an organization celebrated throughout the State. He was promoted to the position of Major, then Brigadier-General, and in 1842 was elected Major-General of the Fifth Division, Pennsylvania Volunteers, composed of the counties of Berks, Lebanon and Dauphin, having succeeded his cousin, General George M. Keim, in command of the Division. While holding this command, and indeed in every other military position, General Keim made a model soldier. Thrown in contact with such men as General Winfield Scott and Colonel Richard M. Johnson, who visited him in their official capacity, he obtained and put to good use the results of their age and experience. Such was the confidence the military authorities had in General Keim, that from 1842 until the breaking out of the rebellion, there were but few encampments of the State troops, from the Delaware to the Ohio, he did not command. In 1844 he was ordered to Philadelphia with a portion of his division, during the fearful riots, and was placed under General Robert Patterson, Senior Major-General in the State. The good opinion every one had of General Keim's command was justly expressed in the following extract from General Orders, No. 30, issued by General Patterson, when the detachment of the Fifth Division was relieved until further orders:

> "The Major-General further desires to express his knowledge of their exemplary and soldier-like deportment while under his command. He will at all times be happy to serve with such troops. Berks County may well be proud of her volunteer soldiery."

In 1848 General Keim was elected Mayor of the city of Reading. In 1859 he was nominated to represent the Berks District in Congress, and was elected, although the majority of the party opposed to him had always reached several thousand.

Shortly after, he was chosen by the people Surveyor General of the State of Pennsylvania.

In 1860 General Keim, warned by signs of the approaching storm that broke over the country, recommended to the Governor that the commonwealth be put in a condition of defence, and suggested a general encampment of the State troops. Governor Curtin therefore ordered an encampment at York, to begin on the third of September, of that year, with General Keim in command. After the events of the twelfth of April, 1861, and the first shot had been fired, troops flocked in from all quarters at the call of the President, to sustain the Union. It was from the Fifth Division P. V. that the first company started for the defence of Washington—the "Ringgold Light Artillery of Reading," Captain James McKnight. It arrived at the capital on the eighteenth of April, 1861, together with several other companies of Pennsylvania Volunteers. General Keim was ordered at once to Washington, where the government immediately gave him full power to prepare for defence. The column commanded by Major General Robert Patterson, formed principally of the Pennsylvania Line, proceeded to rendezvous at Chambersburg. It was composed of two divisions, and General Keim was placed in command of the second. On the fifteenth of June, the army of the "Northern Potomac" as it was called, encamped at Hagerstown, Maryland, and on the second of July it crossed the Potomac into Virginia. The following order was issued to the Commanders of Brigades the day after:

"SECOND DIVISION HEADQUARTERS,
HAINESVILLE, July 3, 1861.

"The march will be resumed ten o'clock A. M. precisely.

Col. Thomas in the advance.
Brigadier-General Negley.
Col. Abercrombie.
Brigadier-General Wynkoop,
Brigadier-General Williams.
Col. Longnecker.

A strong hand must be laid upon those who rob innocent people or defenceless women. The Captain of each company will be held responsible for any-

thing culpable in their commands. The honor and reputation of the army is at stake, and we as a people should sustain the good character bequeathed to us by our forefathers."

By command of Major-General

WILLIAM H. KEIM.

SAMUEL L. YOUNG, *Division Inspector.*

A force under Gen. T. J. Jackson, the "Stonewall" Jackson of subsequent fame, was met at "Falling Waters," but after a skirmish it fell back, and their camp at "Hoke's Run" was occupied. On the fifteenth of July the army advanced from "Martinsburg" to "Bunker's Hill," and on the seventeenth of July Charlestown was reached. By this time, the term of service of many of the regiments having expired, orders for their "muster out" were issued, and the column was so much weakened that it withdrew to "Harper's Ferry."

After the campaign on the upper Potomac, General Keim received from the President the appointment of Brigadier-General of the National troops. He resigned the office of Surveyor General, and was ordered to join the "Army of the Potomac." His brigade was attached to General Casey's division of General Keye's corps, and was sent to Fortress Monroe, where shortly after, under the command of General McClellan, it advanced towards Richmond. At the battle of Williamsburg, one of the most severe contests of the war, General Keim distinguished himself. Although too sick to be on duty, he could not be prevented from leaving the hospital, mounting his horse and leading his brigade on the field. His coolness, his judgment and great bravery, during the action, were conspicuous. When older and more experienced officers, his seniors in rank and years, became impetuous and disheartened, he rested quietly on his saddle, and without moving from his position, gave his orders with self-possession and confidence. Though under fire nearly the whole time, he was perfectly calm. A bomb fell almost under his horse. Every one about him turned pale from fear of the result. Fortunately, from the heavy rains of the previous days, the missile buried itself deeply in the ground, and in exploding, covered him with mud, which he

wiped from his cheek with his handkerchief. The brigade, seeing his safety, went into the fight with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. After the battle General McClellan called on him, complimented him upon the great service he had rendered, and ordered him to the post of honor, in advance of the army. He led his command in the advance, but in a short time his pains and weakness warned him that he could not endure long. He went to Fortress Monroe, stopped there two days, but growing weaker, returned home. He died, surrounded by his family, on the eighteenth of May, 1862, and three days after was buried at Reading with appropriate honors.

When the news of his death reached the forces on the Peninsula, it produced a profound sensation of regret. The following order was read at the head of every regiment in the Army of the Potomac:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
Camp near Cove Harbor, Va., May 26th, 1862.

GENERAL ORDERS No. 129:

"The General commanding announces, with regret, the loss of Brigadier-General William H. Keim, of this army, who died on the 18th inst., at Harrisburg, Pa., of typhoid fever, contracted while in command of his brigade on the Peninsula. General Keim had received in civil life from the people of Pennsylvania proofs of their confidence in his character and abilities, and under the first requisition of the President for the suppression of this rebellion, he was appointed by the Governor of Pennsylvania, to the command of a division of the three-months Volunteers of that State. For his services in that position, he received from the President the position of Brigadier-General in the Volunteer service of the United States, and continued faithfully to discharge his duties, even after disease had fastened itself upon him, having been at the battle of Williamsburg, although scarcely able to sit on a horse. After a life of usefulness and honor, he has been stricken down while patriotically engaged in the military service of his country.

By command of Major-General McClellan.

S. WILLIAMS,
Asst. Adj't General.

Official,—J. A. HARDEE,
Lieut. Col., A. D. C., and A. A. A. G.

APPENDIX.

Dr. George deBenneville had such a remarkable life, that we relate it. He was of a French Huguenot family, and the history of his grandfather, Francois deBenneville, is mentioned in Charles Weiss' book on "The Protestant Refugees." His father and mother, George deBenneville and Marie Granville, removed from Rouen, in Normandy, to London, where they were attached to the Court of King William. George deBenneville was born in London, on the twenty-sixth of July, 1703. His only sister, Marie deBenneville, married the Earl of Limerick, and the present Lord Granville is a blood relative of the family. In the work on English Heraldry, in the Philadelphia Library, owned by the Logans, may be found Dr. deBenneville's coat-of-arms. Queen Anne was his godmother. He was educated under her care, and placed in the royal navy. A piece of plate presented to him by the Queen, and decorated with the royal arms, is still in the possession of one of his descendants. The profession of arms not suiting deBenneville's tastes, and the condition of France worrying his conscience, he felt it his duty to preach the gospel there, so he "opened his testimony" in the market-house of Calais. He was taken before a magistrate and sentenced to eight days' imprisonment for the offence. Notwithstanding the warning that a repetition would endanger his life, he persisted in preaching for a space of two years. He was joined in his labors by a Mr. Durant, and at Dieppe they were seized, tried and condemned to death. Durant was hanged, and while preparations were being made to behead deBenneville, a reprieve arrived from Louis XV. He was imprisoned for a long time in Paris, and was finally liberated through the influ-

ence of influential relatives, aided by the intercession of the Queen. He afterwards went to Germany, where he devoted himself principally to scientific studies, including medicine. In the thirty-eighth year of his age he came to America, established himself as a physician in Oley, Berks county, and traveled extensively among the Indian tribes of northern Pennsylvania. Shortly after his settlement in Oley, he married a daughter of Jean Bertolette. In 1757 he removed to Milestown. In 1784 he was visited by a royal commission from Louis XVI., who requested him to return to France, to aid the government in allaying the discontent that threatened the kingdom, but his great age and infirmities prevented him. He died in 1793, aged ninety years. Dr. deBenneville was a man of great and varied attainments, and his writings now extant in English, French and German, are very interesting and instructive. The family is still prominent in France. They retain the liberal opinions of their ancestors, tempered by a strong love of country. It was the Marquis deBenneville, Minister to Rome, who on the twenty-seventh of July, 1870, announced to Cardinal Antonelli the evacuation of the Roman State by the French troops, and the short and laconic conversation held on that occasion attracted at the time universal attention.