

The Pennsylvania-Dutch

PROFESSOR ALBERT BUSHNELL HART IN "BOSTON EVENING TRANSCRIPT."

"Assimilation" is the task which now presses most weightfully upon the American people; and the controversy over the restriction of immigration practically turns upon the question whether the newcomers are likely to become Americans, or at least the fathers and mothers of Americans. One party unkindly compares Uncle Sam to an ostrich, which envelops pebbles, nails and broken glass, but does not digest them; on the other side people point to the indisputable fact that every American is an emigrant or the descendant of an emigrant. The matter is getting serious in view of the fact that of the ninety millions of Americans, about fifty millions are not descended from English ancestors; and we are all accustomed to the generalization that New York has more Germans than Breslau, more Irish than Dublin, more Italians than Milan, and that Chicago is a great roaring polyglot Vanity Fair, in which all nations may hear their own tongues and be injured by their own cookery.

A DISTINCT TYPE TODAY

This question of the foreigner and his attitude to the native population is as old as the United States. Rogen Harlakenden among the Pilgrims was clearly of Dutch descent; French Huguenots tried to settle the Carolinas a century before the English were permanently established; in several of the colonies, as at Palatine Bridge, New York, New Berne, North Carolina, and Salzburg, Georgia, there were early German settlements; while into other colonies poured a stream of the tough and vigorous Scotch-Irish. It is not an accident that Antrim, Dublin and Derry can be found in New Hampshire, and Donegal in Pennsylvania: for the Scotch-Irish and some of the pure Irish were among the early colonists. By far the largest infusion of foreigners, however, was the settlement of Germans in Pennsylvania, for it was not only numerous, but prolific, both in stout children and in religious sectaries, so that in colonial times it was in civilization and the character of the population different from other parts of the same colony. After nearly two centuries of life in America these people, who have received very few accessions from Germany since the American Revolution, are still separate, and show little signs of complete absorption into the remainder of the community. Here is therefore a test, or rather a suggestion, as to the future of other races which are forming colonies in the midst of the English-speaking population.

This race-element is commonly called the Pennsylvania-Dutch, a term taken rather ill by educated people, who much prefer to be known as Pennsylvania-Germans, but the ordinary farmer, though he perfectly knows the

difference between a Holland Dutchman and a German, commonly speaks of himself and his family as "Dutch." Nobody knows how many of them there are, for they are, of course, included in the census reports as native-born Americans, children of native-born parents, but the counties of Lancaster, Lebanon, Dauphin, York, Cumberland and Berks, which contain more than 700,000 people, are probably over half Pennsylvania-Dutch; half a million would be a low estimate for the total number of these people within the State of Pennsylvania alone.

A VERY MUCH MIXED LANGUAGE.

But it must not be supposed that there is only one kind of Pennsylvania-Dutchman: experts enumerate at least six main varieties, divided according to their church. Of the first are the ordinary German Lutherans; then the United Brethren, or Moravians; then the Dunkers, a Baptist sect; and then the three closely allied sects of Old Mennonites, New Mennonites and Amish. Among themselves these various religious bodies have as many points of repulsion as of attraction; but they unite in obstinately sticking to two languages that are not English. The first is High German, so widely used that the annual edition of the *Neuer Gemeinnütziger Pennsylvanischer Kalender*, which is now in its seventy-eighth annual issue, is printed by the hundred thousand, and includes among the saints' days the birth feasts of Adam and Eve, David and Benjamin Franklin. The second tongue is spoken and not written; yet it is not the Americanized kind of German that one hears in "Over the Rhine" in Cincinnati. The Pennsylvania-Dutch speak what is often called a dialect, but is really a barbarous compound of German and English words in German idiom, somewhat resembling that mixture of Hebrew and German called Yiddish. Infinite are the quaint turns of this so-called language, which is freely spoken and understood by several hundred thousand people, and has even been made the vehicle for verse, especially that of Rev. Mr. Harbaugh, who wrote a volume of poems called *Harbaugh's Harfe* with an English translation on opposite pages. Some phrases will illustrate this speech. *Kookamulio* is an almost unrecognizable form of *Guck mal da*. *Buggy-forray* is Pennsylvania-Dutch for *im Wagen fahren*. A droll phrase, especially applicable to this season of the year, is, "Is your off off?" meaning, "Is your vacation over?" A lawyer of large experience and knowledge, former attorney general of the State, declares that he has heard a Dutch justice say: "*Ich habe suit jebrought and execution geissued*." The same eminent lawyer deposes that within about two years he happened to go into a court, where proceedings among Dutchmen were going on

before a Dutch justice, the witnesses being examined in Pennsylvania-Dutch. The counsel, interrupted for a moment by a conversation in English, unconsciously resumed his questioning in English, to which the witness replied in English; presently, without anybody's noticing it, the witness fell back into Pennsylvania-Dutch, and after a little the counsel also took up that tongue. Meanwhile a stenographer was busy taking down the testimony, and when asked what language he used, he answered: "Oh, I take notes in English, and nobody ever finds any fault."

An example of phonetic transliteration of the dialect is as follows: "*Der klea meant mer awer, sei net recht g'sund, for er kreisht ols so greisel-heftick orrick in der nacht. De olt Lawbucksy behaupt er is wos mer aw gewocksa heast, un meant mer set braucha before,*"—which in German would be: "*Der kleines meint mir aber, sei nicht recht gesund das er schreit aus so greuelheftig arg in der nacht. Die alte Lawbucksin behauptet er ist was wir gewachsen heissen, und meint wir sollten brauchen dafür.*" In English: "The child seems to me not to be quite well, for he screamed so cruel hard in the night. Lawbucks's woman insists he has dropsy and thinks that we ought to do something for it."

A copy of a singular example of an inscription in Pennsylvania-Dutch hangs in the house of General Hensel near Lancaster:

GOTGESEGNEDEISESHAUS
UNTALES WAS DAGEHETEINUNT
AUSGOTGESEGNEALESAMPTUNT
DARZVDASCANZELAMTGOTAL
EINDIEEHPSONNSTKEINEMMENS
CHENMEHRANNO 1759 JAHR
PETER BRICKERELISABETHBRICKER-
IN.

It takes close attention and a subdivision of the puzzle into component words to discover that this is a German inscription put up by Peter Bricker and his "Brickeress" asking "God to bless this house and all that goes therein or out and all authority and the village and the pulpit and to God alone be the honor else mankind no more. Anno the year 1759." One of the worst specimens of Pennsylvania-Dutch on record was recorded by an ear-witness as follows: "*Ich habe mein Haus geschingled und geclapboarded.*" Although anybody who knows some German can catch the sense of Pennsylvania-Dutch, none but an adept could express his more elusive emotions in this tongue.

NOT OVER FRIENDLY TO EDUCATION.

As a matter of fact probably seven-tenths of the Pennsylvania-Dutch can talk English, and many of them perfect English; still there are many thousands who are dependent upon the jargon for communication with their fellowmen. The Pennsylvania-Dutchman does not favor too much education for young people

because, he says, "It makes them lazy"; if pushed a little farther, he defines his saying to mean that if young people are too much educated they are not willing to stay on the farm, and farm-work is what people are made for. It is one of the mysteries of the situation that the free schools have not long since broken up and dispelled the Pennsylvania-Dutch lingo, as they have disposed of so many other foreign languages. One trouble is that the free schools of Pennsylvania were not founded until well on in the nineteenth century, and to this day the State authorities are not rigorous in enforcing the requirements as to the length of the school-term and the character of the teaching; furthermore, in many communities the children are all or nearly all Pennsylvania-Dutch and are not driven by that wholesome desire to be like their neighbors, which causes many foreign-born children to shake off their accent. Nevertheless there are several colleges kept up by the Pennsylvania-Dutch churches and many of the sects have an educated ministry.

ODD OLD LANCASTER.

Some of the children of Pennsylvania-Dutch families find their way into the great world at last, and many of them might compete in outward show with Yankees, for the Pennsylvania-Dutch are a rich people. The most interesting and probably the most thriving place in the Dutch counties is Lancaster, which in the time of the Revolution was already so important that the Continental Congress sat there for a time. Its conservatism is shown by the existence on one street of five business-houses, carried on under the same firm-name as one-hundred and forty years ago. It is almost the only town in the United States which still possesses two of the old-fashioned inns, where you drive through an archway into a courtyard surrounded by galleries, such as Dickens loved to describe.

How many thousand stamping horses have kept how many thousand guests awake in the old Leopard Inn at Lancaster? There in Lancaster and the other cities of the region, the Pennsylvania-Dutch for the most part have thrown over their peculiar ways, and have become identified with the rest of the community—so much so as sometimes to be observers of the peculiarities of their countrymen. The typical Pennsylvania-Dutchman is a farmer, possessing a smaller or a greater (usually a greater) quantity of that bountiful soil which, properly enriched, makes Lancaster county the richest agricultural county in the United States. Somewhere on this property is one of those enormous barns with an overhang for handling the cattle; and incidentally there is a house, which, though on a much smaller scale than the barn, is usually neat and almost invariably clean. The farming would take away the breath of a Kansas or Texas brother, for beef-cattle are raised in considerable numbers alongside

splendid crops of grain. But in Lancaster county the product of most value is tobacco; and it is a truth vouched for by experts that from one farm of 130 acres last year was taken \$11,000 in tobacco, besides \$3,000 worth of other crops. Almost every square yard of the countryside is under cultivation, till you reach the hilltops where there is some woodland; it is like Iowa for the sweep of completely occupied farmlands. The ordinary farm-team is still four horses, with a man mounted on the near-wheel horse, although the old-fashioned Conestoga wagon, which in old times could be seen in trains of as many as two hundred together, with its high body looking like the fore-castle and aftercastle of a seventeenth-century ship, and its canvas top, has almost disappeared.

TRUE PEASANTS

These are the canny people from whose savings arise banks and trust-companies; whose trade makes part of the wealth of the thriving cities, whose capital has constructed a network of trolleys; whose investments extend throughout the Union. Yet the true Pennsylvania-Dutchman is never a "country gentleman"; he likes to have money and will spend large sums for anything upon which he sets his heart, but has a thick streak of resolute determination not to part with his money on slight occasion. It was one of the many brilliant generalizations of the late Nathaniel Shaler, that one of the main difficulties with American government, and especially with city government, is the attempt of a foreign peasant class to adapt itself to urban life. Now the true peasant is hardly to be found anywhere in the United States, outside the rural negroes of the South; the Southern poor white has not the peasant's thrift; the Western farmer is a yeoman and not a yokel; the New England agriculturist is a town-meeting in himself. The Pennsylvania-Dutch are, however, genuine peasants, much of the type of the well-to-do French peasant, accustomed to a simple and inexpensive life, unterrified by the accumulation of money, extravagantly fond of owning land, and therefore showing striking contrasts of standard and behavior.

Here is one example taken from a recent personal experience. There is in Lancaster county a Pennsylvania-Dutchman, a cigar-manufacturer on a small scale, who lives in a very comfortable house, recently enlarged, and is known to be "well fixed." A party of visitors came to his place, but Heinrich was away and the honors of the place were done by Mrs. Heinrich, a stately and handsome woman, who would have been at perfect ease with the governor of the Commonwealth, had he been one of the company, and did the honors of the place as a duchess might have done. When someone noticed a handsome porcelain refrigerator standing in the living-room, and asked if he might look into it, she replied with perfect serenity: "Oh, yes, but there isn't anything

in it but newspapers. You see it's thisaway. Heinrich thinks we don't need ice because we got such a cool cellar and so we don't use that refrigerator." "But where is Heinrich today?" "Oh, you see it's thisaway, we started yesterday, off in one of our automobiles and it broke down, and we had to come home in the trolley; and so today Heinrich, he took our other automobile, and he's gone to get that one fixed." Heinrich is a dabster in automobiles, buying and selling to buy a better one; and he is perfectly willing to pay a hundred or two dollars for a refrigerator; but what is the use of laying out money on ice, when you have such a cool cellar?

DUTCHMEN DRIVE OUT IRISH

It is only when on the ground that one realizes that the Pennsylvania-Dutch are not the only individual and discordant factor in that State; central Pennsylvania was settled by four different race-elements—the Germans, the Scotch-Irish, the Quakers, and the people of English stock, including a few Yankees. The Quakers took up a belt of territory running through the Chester Valley, and among them grew up an anti-slavery and abolition strip; the Scotch-Irish took a parallel belt; and the German lay between the two; hence an antagonism which has not yet worn out, since the Quakers were anti-slavery. But their Irish and Dutch neighbors were inclined to be pro-slavery. In the riot at Christiana, a few miles from Lancaster, in 1851, when one Gorsuch was killed in the effort to recapture his runaway slaves, the whole eastern end of the State was in an uproar, and a governor was defeated on the issue of siding with the pro-slavery faction. The Scotch-Irish as farmers have steadily lost ground to the Dutchmen, who stand ready to buy up farms as they become vacant; and there is a good story of a lonely Scotch-Irishman, the only one left in a township, who finds all his neighbors voting against him on the question of changing a road, and when the vote is taken, says, "I don't mind the d—d Dutchmen, but they come in here and spoil our society." Simon Cameron was of the Scotch-Irish, or rather of the pure Scotch blood, but married into the Pennsylvania-Dutch. Of course the reason for the fading away of the Scotch-Irish farmers is that they are gone to the cities to make iron, to make money, and to make material for the suits of the attorney general of the United States. Undoubtedly, however, one of the reasons for the permanence of the Pennsylvania-Dutch is the lack of harmony and neighborly feeling with their nearest neighbors. You know a Scotch-Irish farm when you see it, because it has not a red barn and is not so neatly kept up.

VEXED, THEOLOGICALLY AND POLITICALLY

A stronger reason for the segregation of these people is their fondness for abstruse theological hairsplitting, such as might better befit their Calvinistic neighbors. The German

immigrants as early as 1708 began to include Baptists—of whom the strongest sects nowadays are the Dunkers, and ascetics like the communities at Ephrata, Lititz and Bethlehem.

The Ephrata community, which was practically a monastery and nunnery, founded by Conrad Beissel in 1728, is not yet quite extinct; and the *Chronicon Ephratense*, in Dr. Hark's genial translation, is one of the quaintest services of American church-history. In his early life in Germany Beissel was almost prevented from entering on his work by consumption, till a counselor said to him, "My friend, you meditate too much on the world's dark side"; and after he had given him some instructions as to his condition, he prescribed the use of sheep's ribs, "by which means, through God's grace, he became well again." In Lancaster county the Mennonites and the Amish (pronounced "Aw-mish"), are the most numerous and decidedly the most picturesque, since they still maintain a costume, special observances, and a separate life. The old Mennonites and the new Mennonites appear to be visibly distinguished in that the white caps of the old Mennonite women are allowed to flow loosely, while among the new Mennonites, as a stricter and severer church, the cap-strings are tied firmly under the chin. The women wear blue or red tight-fitting dresses with a pointed cape of gray and commonly a sunbonnet over the cap; the Mennonite men are not very different from their neighbors. New Mennonites literally put their fingers in their ears if exposed to religious exhortation of any but their own people, even at a funeral. The Amish, however, are strongly marked, because the men give to their head a "Dutch cap," which makes them resemble the Holland youth whose portraits adorn the advertisements of cereals, let their beards grow (hence they were formerly called "beardy men"), and fasten their gray home-made garments with hooks and eyes. Neither Mennonites nor Amish will take an oath, nor go to war; hence, when other Pennsylvania-Dutchmen during the Revolution entered the patriot army the Mennonites were considered Tories. Accepting this conservative position in politics, they became Federalists, and their region approved the Federal Constitution of 1787; the other Germans, in their role of patriots, became Jeffersonian Democrats, and to this day Berks county, in which they abound, is an unalterable Democratic stronghold, in which for thirty years after his death they were still reputed to be voting at every election for Andrew Jackson for President; while neighboring Lancaster county, in which Mennonites are abundant, is overwhelmingly Republican. The Amish, better than any of the other sects, stand by their ancient customs; women commonly do not sit at the table with the men, who take each his own portion from a common dish; and the women come afterward. The Amish almost invariably worship in private houses; there are

only two church buildings of that sect in Lancaster county; their religious services last three or four hours, including sermons by lay preachers. Their weddings last all day, and if there be an unmarried brother or sister older than the bride, the guests go through the ceremony of setting the person thus passed by "on the bake-oven." As you go through the country the Amish houses may be recognized by their extraordinary colors; a stone house stuccoed and painted orange; a wooden house raspberry color with blue blinds, or a fine shade of mauve. The Amish are fond of good horses and if your automobile passes a couple of Amish girls in their scant red dresses, black aprons and white caps, they will adjure you: "Don't let her run off now yet," but in the same breath will call you to notice that they are driving a borrowed horse; the implication being that they have better horses at home. The Amish stand by each other in times of difficulty and are a straightforward and honest folk, though a bit too much like the good people of Thrums when it comes to doctrine. There is a branch of the Amish popularly known as the "whip-socket Amish," founded by a brother who rebelled at the discipline of the regular Amish because he would have a whip-socket, instead of carrying his whip in his hand, as was the custom. Nevertheless the Amish are quick to take up new agricultural and household implements, and are highly esteemed amid the fraternity of patent wash-boilers, hayforks and stump-pullers.

ENGLISH NAMES THERE TOO

Intermingled with the Dutch and the Irish and the Quakers in Lancaster county are most interesting memorials of another Church and influence. As the Boston politician, Ireland-born, remarked when he noticed the names of the candidates for school committee: "How these Americans are pushing in!" Some of the oldest Episcopal churches in the Middle States are to be found in Lancaster county, especially Lacock church; Donegal church, which lies close by the Cameron estate; and St. John's churchyard, in which is the renowned tombstone of "Adelaide with the broken lily," emblem of a life ruined by a worthless husband. The old King's highway, the first road toward the Far West, can still be traversed from Philadelphia to Lancaster, and along it are strung many old taverns, such as the Bird-in-Hand, with a large space in front where the wagons were drawn up at night. There is a hospitable house at Kinzer, near Lancaster, where on the piazza hang two of the fine old signboards, one of them, "The Three Crowns," shot through with the bullets of Republican enthusiasts, and insufficiently painted over as "The Waterloo."

Really to enjoy this region one needs a host who shall be brimful of the lore of the country; and a company of eminent spirits who will give a day's holiday to motoring over the undeniably bad roads, among the rich farms

and through the picturesque hills, stopping at Lititz for the children to be treated to ice cream sandwiches by a Pennsylvanian whom the children, unabashed by "excellencies," straightway "know by his picture," and so to the mansion of a former Pennsylvania senator who loves the soil of Lancaster county best of

all the surface of the earth. Socially, politically, financially, industrially, the Pennsylvania-Dutch can not furnish their own leaders, yet whatever their religious and social narrowness, they have set to the whole nation an example of industry, thrift and respect for the rights of others.