

SOME EARLY PRINTERS.

In the early days of the present century, in the then borough of Lancaster, at the conjunction of the old Market Square with what was then known by the unpretending name of Moravian alley, but which in this age of improvement and change has been dignified with the commercial name of Market street, there stood an old one-story block house, having in front two windows and a door, and, from its ancient and dingy appearance, might have been looked upon as a contemporary of the old landmarks described by history, as the home of the frontiersman in the early settlement of our county, serving him not only as a dwelling, but also as a protection against the attacks of the savages, who surrounded him. The building referred to, although not used as a defense against physical force or attacks, was, nevertheless, occupied in aiding and carrying on a warfare in which was involved the political existence of one of the two great parties, which then politically divided this country, and was conducted with a bitterness and acrimony which has not been witnessed since, frequently invading the social circles of domestic life, and inflicting wounds which required many years to heal. But in all this earnestness and enthusiasm the people were moved by honest impulse. The destructive vice of corruption, which is now the besetting sin of the nation, and over which they have just cause to mourn, was then unheard of, and, if not corrected, will draw us into that whirlpool of destruction which has engulfed nearly every Republic.

In its outward appearance, how-

ever, there was nothing in this odd, ungainly structure to indicate that there was in it an indwelling moral or intellectual force, which, politically, operated upon the minds of a large number of the staid citizens of the garden of America; this, however, is a fact well established and acknowledged by those who are acquainted with the history of our county in those days. The question may then be asked by some, wherein did that intellectual force reside, and what were the agencies employed to call it into existence, and caused it to operate for good or evil upon the minds of a considerable portion of the people of this county?

After a lapse of half a century, during which time most of those who were engaged in the political contests of that day have passed away, and when the political views of many of those who have followed them, as well as their social habits and manner of living, are entirely changed, and who are disposed to consider the plain, simple habits and manners of the people of that period, more becoming the days when Adam delved and Eve spun, the truth of the answer will scarcely be realized when they are told that it was to be found in the persons of Henry and Benjamin Grimler, brothers and editors of a German newspaper of diminutive dimensions, called, in its vernacular language, "Den Wahre Amerikaner," meaning, in English "The True American," and issuing weekly from this old block house, those two men, in the vigor of their manhood, plain in their manners and retiring in their habits, but earnest and diligent in their calling, without the patronage of influential or wealthy friends, little known in the community in which they lived, but resting in the conscientious convictions that the political cause they had espoused was identified with the welfare and best interests of the people, and trusting in

the blessings of God upon their efforts, with the aid of an old-fashioned printing press, worked by hand, they thus equipped made their advent as editors and launched their little boat upon the troublesome and agitated waters of politics, with no helmsman to guide or direct them. But soon this little bark, bearing at its head, in large German letters, its name, was seen floating on those unsettled waters, fighting manfully in maintaining those political principles which they had undertaken to support, and in assisting in building up that party which, for many years afterwards, bore its banner in triumph and became the dominant or ruling party of this country. While this paper was in full life, its weekly visits were anxiously looked for, and received as a welcome messenger in many a dwelling of this county. There appeared to be a living force or vital power in that little sheet which inspired many with its sentiments, who, embracing its teachings, joined to strengthen the ranks of that party which, for many years, as intimated before, swayed the political destinies of this Union, but who, in their might, forgetting that prudence and independence, which governed them in their infancy, was shorn of its strength. Whether it shall again be restored time alone will tell.

The majority of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, which then sat at Lancaster, being Democratic, recognizing not only the fealty of this paper to their party, but that the influence which it exercised with the people was a power which not only demanded their respect, but their support and patronage, elected them printers of one of their bodies.

The writer of this sketch of an object of a bygone age, and some of the incidents connected with it, does not wish to be understood that the True American was the only paper of that political faith in this county, and its

editors the only ones to proclaim the doctrines of Democracy. Wm. Dickson was the editor of the English paper of the same political principles, and founder of the Lancaster Intelligencer of the present day, but which has been rejuvenated by its present efficient editor, and whose efforts in behalf of the Democratic party are put forth daily. That paper in those early days, like at the present, labored faithfully in behalf of their party, but, as the German language was then preferred by many of our citizens, a paper printed in that language was better calculated to labor efficiently with them, being better understood and more appreciated than any other, and this was one of the causes which enhanced the merits, as well as the popularity, of the paper first incidentally introduced in the preceding remarks.

While glancing at the character of the Democratic editors of the times referred to, their labors will be better understood by touching also upon the character of the editor who conducted the Lancaster Journal, the leading paper of the Federal party in this county, William Hamilton, a man of fine abilities, a fluent writer, decided in his character, fearless in expressing his views, and unsparing in the pungency of his criticism upon the measures of the Government, which was Democratic, denouncing them as detrimental to the best interests of the country. In reviewing the remarks and acts of his compeers he frequently wrote with a pen steeped in gall; the blows which he gave were struck with a strong hand. He was a journalist who had the ability and courage to conduct, with skill, the leading paper of a strong political party.

It therefore required more than ordinary skill to ward off his blows, and still more to strike back with effect. Although denouncing the declaration of war as unpropitiously commenced,

before, according to his views, proper preparations had been made by the government to meet that crisis, yet when the tocsin of war was sounded and the British had landed on our shores, led by the indomitable spirit of General Ross, and were marching to attack the city of Baltimore, Hamilton and Hambright, two decided federalists, were among the first to raise volunteer companies and march as captains in defense of the threatened city. Hamilton soon after his arrival there was raised to the rank of a Colonel. These volunteer companies, after being encamped near Baltimore for about three months, were discharged a few days before Christmas. In their march back to Lancaster, during the night preceding their entry into the town they even quartered in a tavern on the Columbia turnpike about three miles from Lancaster, then known as Hornberger tavern. Next morning many of the citizens of Lancaster, either from curiosity or a desire to manifest a proper appreciation of the value of the service rendered by the volunteers, went out to their place of rendezvous, and accompanied them into town. The writer of these remarks, then a lad of about nine years of age, traveling on foot, was among the number. The day was cold, but the people, as if warmed by the spirit of patriotism, endured it patiently. With regard to the two companies their kind feeling for each other, for some reason, became estranged, and when they reached the head of the town declined to enter together, one of them marching down West King street and the other down Orange street. Some years after the war of 1812, Captain Hambright, who commanded one of the Lancaster Phalanx, offered himself as a candidate for the office of Sheriff of this county. His nomination, however, was strenuously opposed by a majority of the leaders of the Federal

party, although he was the choice of the rank and file of the people. The result was that he was not nominated by the convention of delegates when they met for the purpose of settling a ticket, the successful nominee being a grandson of a signer of the Declaration of Independence from this county. This nomination was ill received by many and a mass meeting was soon afterwards called, without distinction of party, for the purpose of considering the claims and merits of Capt. Hambright and the meeting when assembled declared him the people's candidate for the office to which he aspired. Benjamin Grimler, although a decided Democrat, was active in promoting this meeting, and when assembled was one of the active spirits in managing its proceedings. The address to the people of the county adopted by this meeting was drafted by him, and was admirably drawn, in such way as to touch the patriotic feelings of the community, which was then very sensitive owing to the late war, and to awaken a sense of gratitude for the military services rendered by the candidate in marching in defense of our country. The keynotes of the address were, "Shall patriotism be forgotten, shall love of country not be rewarded?" and upon those notes he played with so much skill and art that the feelings of a majority of the people were attuned to those sentiments and Captain Hambright was elected.

Henry Grimler died in the prime of life, being at the time of his death in the thirty-seventh year of his age. His physique was well developed, he being nearly six feet in height and well proportioned, his features were prominent, his countenance open and serious, his eyes and hair dark, and his whole appearance indicated that he meant something in society. His education was confined to the schools of Lancas-

ter as they were in his boyhood, but availing himself of the advantages which were presented while he was learning the printing business, and by close and unremitting attention afterwards to the passing events of the times, he enlarged his mind by observation and by hard study and unremitting industry became well acquainted with the ancient and modern literature of his day. His English composition, some of which is still extant, shows that he was a deep thinker. His style was nervous, but pleasing and fluent, his sentiments were clearly expressed and the perspicuity with which he wrote manifested that he comprehended the subject which occupied his mind and about which he wrote. He sometimes indulged in poetical effusions, which are not unworthy of consideration. As to his merits as a German scholar, the writer can only judge by the effect and influence which he and his co-partners uniting had upon the people whom they addressed and the success which they achieved as journalists. In Trinity Lutheran burial ground in Lancaster a marble slab marks the place where rests his mortal remains, bearing the simple inscription of his name, and a quotation from Pope, "An honest man the noblest work of God."

Benjamin Grimler was also a man of good appearance and a fluent writer, rather specious, however, than sound, and did not contain the strength of thought which was reflected in many of the articles written by his brother, but was apparently of a more social disposition, mixing a great deal with society, and rather of a genial temper. He became popular with an extensive acquaintance, which he formed in his social intercourse with society, and was at one time elected a member to the Legislature from this county. He died at about the age of fifty-four

years. His remains are also buried in the Lutheran burial ground at Lancaster.

After Henry Grimler's death his brother and co-editor succeeded to the entire editorship of the paper, but the vitality which at one time animated its columns appeared as if paralyzed by his death. His successor manifesting an indifference to its future prosperity, the controlling political power which it at one time exercised was relaxed, and after languishing for a few years was suffered to die by neglect.

Hannah Grimler, the mother of Henry and Benjamin Grimler, was born in Charlestown, South Carolina, but came to Philadelphia when young, and made that city the place of her residence, when she was married to Henry Augustus Grimler, a native of Wurtemberg, Germany. Of his early history little is now known by the writer hereof: according to tradition, he appears to have been of a restless disposition, frequently changing his place of residence. At the time of his death he left his widow in a dependent condition with a large family claiming her support. Many a woman under similar circumstances and with less energy than she possessed would have despaired of carrying so heavy a load, but, instead of yielding to a spirit of despondency, she braced herself for the emergency which devolved upon her, and trusting to the guidance of her God whom she loved to worship, for she was a devout Christian, she went to work and by industry and frugality, and by her unaided efforts, raised her infant family and secured to her two sons before alluded to what was then considered an ordinary English education. She was a woman of more than ordinary natural abilities, and was what may be emphatically called a strong-minded woman, not according, however, to the modern acceptance of

that term, for she was not ambitious of securing to herself the enjoyment of those political rights which are now possessed only by the sterner sex; her aim was to instil into the minds of her children those religious and moral principles which would fit them for a faithful discharge of their duties in this life, and also to enable them to prepare for the performance of those higher duties which, if properly performed, will lead us in safety through the trials and difficulties of this life to that blissful abode secured by the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Paradise of Heaven.

Judging from her maiden name, the presumption is that she sprung from a German ancestry, but in speaking English there was not the least idiom in her speech to indicate that she knew any but that language, although in speaking the German she was equally fluent. In her conversation she was rather serious, and, while her manners indicated that she was not a stranger to the amenities and refinements of social life, yet she displayed none of that timidity which is sometimes shown by women while attending to the business concerns of life. In her business transactions and in her social intercourse she appeared perfectly at ease, expressing her views with clearness, fluency and independence, and which sometimes showed that she did not always subscribe to the teachings of others. She was unwavering in her belief, in the teachings and revelations of the Scriptures.

Often when engaged, and apparently busily occupied, she would suddenly, as if moved by some spiritual impulse, withdraw to some private apartment, and there, in humble prostration, offer up an ejaculatory prayer. In consequence of her limited means of accumulating property, it being confined entirely to her personal industry, necessity compelled her to exercise

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