

Trials of an Immigrant Family.

Few historians worthy of the name overlook or neglect to take account of the origin of a people or of their experiences and wanderings previous to their final settlement. Notable illustrations of this fact are supplied in the story of God's chosen people of old and of the migrations of nations in more recent times.

In our own country, it is especially important to look intently into the faces of the immigrants, seeing they are so various in origin, and grow into such a heterogeneous conglomeration. Nor should this effort to become acquainted be expended only on those who arrive in the earlier years of the eighteenth century. They, indeed, came as pilgrims to obtain religious freedom, while the later were generally impelled by their love of civil liberty. Both the earlier and the later fled from war and strove to found new homes in this, our land of plenty.

It was in the year 1844 that the assessor and collector of internal revenue, in a small town in southern or upper Germany, within half an hour of the banks of the historic Rhine, and consequently of Alsace, then French territory, received notice of his discharge from the service of the State, his dismissal from office, because of his adhesion to the party of the Left, for Germany was already feeling the throes of the Revolution of 1848. It would have been in vain to plead distinguished services as guardsman on the frontier, performed at the risk of life, wounds received there whose scars were eloquent witnesses of fidelity to duty, and of bravery in its discharge for the Fatherland. What could such

testimony avail against the accusation of being a "Freisinniger?" So Herr B. pocketed his discharge, and keenly feeling the disgrace resolved to emigrate to America, "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Who can realize what the patriot feels at such a forced renunciation of his native land? His little son, four years of age, his usual companion to the "bier-stube," is gently told that he cannot go along this time, for father is going very far away, and seats himself on the sill of the stable door to weep until he falls asleep. The wife and the remaining four children must remain behind, for the resolution was suddenly taken, and affairs are in an unsettled condition.

The voyage was via Havre, and among the memorable incidents was a shipwreck. Every mast was carried away by the storm, the hatches were down for three days, and not a soul was suffered on deck. Arrived in New York, a weaver by trade, his first care was to secure employment. What a change from official life to common toil! Even this was difficult to obtain, for times were hard in 1844, communication for one ignorant of the language not easy, and no one cared to lend a helping hand to the "Dutchman," as he was called. Under these circumstances, unacquainted with the language, the country, but well acquainted with the "bier-stube" and weaned from steady work by his six years' soldier and nine years' official life, it is not hard to imagine how or why Herr B. drifted.

At the close of a year the money brought over is gone. Wife and children are still in Germany, delayed through complications and struggles to save as much as possible from the wreck of his fortune. What better to do than return and bring them over? Alas, to return is to find that the sale of his property is involved in a law-

suit. Who does not know the vexations of the law's delays? What more natural than to visit his old haunts? There he meets his enemies and traducers, who are now in favor, and who waylay him on his way home to drown him in the creek that flows through the town, or to murder him in some other way. Covered with bruises and wounds, the nightwatchmen, who, fortunately, interrupted the proceedings, carry him home on a ladder, and a lawsuit follows. He is guarded at his home until he may have sufficiently recovered to appear at Court. But his wife does not mean that he shall be entangled in the meshes of the law, and persuades the watchers that their services are not needed, and when they—feeling that their prisoner is too feeble to escape—are asleep, on the first floor, he, with her aid, descends, escapes from the house, flees to the Rhine, and, with a Kronen-thaler, secures the services of a faithful ferryman to take him across the river to Zabbern, in Alsace.

He reaches Strasburg alone, and here awaits the arrival and assistance of his oldest daughter, a maiden of fifteen. All has gone well since that awful night, but who can describe the feelings of the tender girl, and the agony and cruel fears of that mother! "O, mother, what shall I do if father should die? How shall I find out where he is, and what will become of us on the ship, if we should both be sick?" How can the mother comfort her? How can she bear to part with her under such circumstances? Amid tears and embraces, she urges her to go to the aid of her father, assuring her that she will send her all the money she may need to come home should father die. You, fathers and mothers, who have not known such awful experiences, remember them when you sit in judgment on the foreigner.

The voyage was uneventful. Wilhelmina was seasick nearly all the time, and the father was an indifferent nurse. On her arrival she was hired out, first to a countryman, and soon after to entire strangers in Bristol, Pa., where we will leave her struggling with untoward circumstances, due to extreme youth and an unknown tongue.

Herr B. drifted again, finding employment now in a rubber factory in New Brunswick, a cotton mill in Connecticut, and on the streets, as a common laborer, in New York. Here let us leave him and return to his native town, Kappel, where his wife is wrestling for the purchase money for the finest house in the town, not quite completed yet, withheld in the hope that, wearied with the law's delays, she will depart the country without it. Once the first lady of the town, whom all delighted to honor, she now has public sentiment against her. But though indifferently educated, she wins in the end, and with the proceeds of the sale of the property is at length ready to leave the Fatherland with the four remaining children, of whom the eldest is twelve years old and the youngest four. It was on the 18th of June, when the children, rejoicing at the prospects of a journey to America, said good-bye to Aunt Marian, still fondly clinging to the youngest, hoping that Vetter Holzer will bring her back with him from Strasburg, whither the kind uncle accompanied them. Bellin, the little pet dog, is sold to avoid paying tax, and has been converted into a savory meal by the purchaser. "I have the money," says little eight-year-old Josephine, trudging along with a little basket, to the great chagrin of the mother, who has no patience with the child's giving away important family secrets. But the chief depository of the money, which was converted into one thousand five franc

thalers in Strasburg, the net proceeds of all their worldly possessions, was a strong belt worn around her body by the mother, and a knapsack carried by the oldest son, assisted by some of his schoolmates, who accompanied him to the landing place. The departure took place in the early dawn before sunrise, and the route was down the Rhine on a flat-boat, propelled by poling instead of rowing, carrying wood to that city. Here they are detained three days before they can make arrangements to go to Paris by diligence. Their fellow-passengers are soldiers, en route to Algiers, whose ribald songs, in a foreign tongue, and boisterous behavior makes the mother extremely tired. Delay at Paris enabled them to see some of the sights of that great capital and to get into trouble, because the youngest son's desire for cherries got the better of him at a fruit stand, where he reached for one, surreptitiously, as he thought, but the fruit woman was too much on the alert, and would not be pacified until payment was made.

Finally the railroad train carried them from Paris through Rouen to Havre, where over two weeks' delay added to their vexation and expense, and afforded an opportunity for the youngest child to wander away, get lost while looking for Vetter Holzer, to whom she was greatly attached. All the family immediately go on a search for her, and, fortune smiling, find her about one mile away from the boarding house along the dock, asleep in the arms of a man who, pitying her crying for her uncle, picked her up, and would have kept her, had no one appeared to claim her.

Ships being scarce, they were, contrary to the terms of the contract which called for passage in a mail packet, crowded into a merchant vessel, with two masts and a half, named the Jupiter, so leaky as to require vigorous pumping every two hours of

the day and of the night. Sea sickness disabling the mother, the oldest son must take charge of affairs, and act as cook, for all the passengers must board themselves, and cook, using one stove in common. Assuming that all these people had the usual kind and quantity of human nature, and remembering the various languages, German in its different dialects, French and English, represented, it is easily seen that the scene at the tower of Babel was nowhere in comparison to those at the ship-stove just before mealtime.

Among the incidents of the voyage may be mentioned the death of a passenger, a girl twelve years of age, whose body, wrapped in sail cloth and weighted with a stone, was slid down an inclined plank into the sea, the captain having previously read the burial service.

Another interesting fact was that a stowaway, a young woman, was confined on board ship, Mrs. B. acting as midwife on the occasion.

A somnambulist, a young lady crossing the ocean with her betrothed, arose from her couch one night and so belabored him with her tongue, in such vile terms withal, nevertheless all unconscious, that the match was broken off from that very night.

Castle Garden not yet in existence, the Jupiter lands at the Sixteenth street wharf on the East River, preparatory to going on the dry dock for repairs. The emigrants' baggage, with themselves seated on the top, is transported in a cart to their hotel. The New York small boy in crowds pursues and greets them with the insulting shout of Dutch! Dutch! reinforcing this agreeable diversion by pelting them with stones en route.

And now began the search for a home and employment. Alas, Herr B. had spent most of his time at New York, seldom at work, and, consequently, in debt. After a week's stay

in New York, Mauch Chunk was suggested, and the journey by canal boat, with "a landsman," an acquaintance from the Fatherland, brought them to that hive of industry, but manual labor, shoveling coal, was too hard for the ex-collector and assessor, and so he drifted into wood-chopping in the Pine Swamp, to peddling, to ore-washing, to canal-boating. The depth of poverty was reached in one year, when all the money brought over was gone, one eight-year-old girl in the cotton mill, one thirteen-year-old son on the canal, too poor to purchase milk or sugar for the breakfast coffee, which was garnished with dry bread. Out of these depths the family was led from the village of South Easton to "the Swamps" in Bucks county, and Herr B., with his two sons, aged fourteen and seven, began to be a boatman on his own account, his entire capital consisting of a debt of \$30, which he incurred in order to purchase a horse. His wife and two daughters now tenanted in a log cabin (instead of the finest building in Kappel am Rhein, the only one having a mansard roof, and garnished with twelve large windows), in the "bush," as it was called, far from human habitation, a stranger in a strange land. For whole days they sat and wept, the mother's heart beating in the canal. But the movement was an upward one, and henceforth the family gradually attained to independence. Only two years after this a letter was sent to Germany with the proud announcement "Wir sind jetzt mit leib und seeie Amerikaner," "we are now body and soul Americans."

In conclusion, it must be said that even Mrs. B., in later life, rejoiced that Herr B. was no longer collector; in short, that she was in America, where

"In fair virtue's road
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous
load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human
kind."

In the foregoing pictures from real life, it may be seen that the condition of poor people was far worse fifty years ago than now. That the lot of the emigrant is an unenviable one, and that he is, therefore, entitled to sympathy and aid rather than scorn and contempt. What a field this theme would afford for a Dickens!

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Author: Buehrle, Robert K.

Title: Trials of an immigrant family / by Dr. R. K. Buehrle.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Buehrle family.
Immigrants--Pennsylvania--Lancaster County.
Immigrants--Pennsylvania.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1899-1900

Description: [87]-94 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 4,
no. 3 & 4

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.4

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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