THE SCOTCH-IRISH

The province of Pennsylvania was early attractive to emigrants from other countries. It was recommended by its free government, by the character of its fundamental laws,fertile soil, salubrious and temperate climate, its adaptation to a rural population, with advantages for trade, commerce and manufactures.

These emigrants were from various parts of Europe. They were not homogeneous, but were diversified by their origin, religious principles, habits and language. This diversity, arising from their different nationalities, divided them into three distinctly marked classes, whose separation was maintained unbroken for many generations, and is not yet effaced.

It is a singular fact that the white races in Pennsylvania are remarkably unmixed,and retain their original character beyond that of any State in the Union. These distinctly marked races are the English, the German and the Scotch and Scotch-Irish. Emigrants from other countries contributed to swell the population. Among the choicest of the early settlers were the Swedes, the Welsh, the Huguenots, the Hollanders and the Swiss; but their numbers were small compared with those of the races I have just mentioned, and their peculiar characteristics, through admixture with the people of other nationalities, and the mellowing influence of time, are scarcely recognizable.

The associates and followers of

Penn, known as Friends or Quakers, who were mainly of English descent, were amongst the first emigrants, and settled chiefly in Philadelphia and the country near it, embracing what is now Delaware county, the eastern and central portions of Chester county, and the southern parts of Bucks and Montgomery counties. They were an orderly, industrious and law abiding people, cultivating peace with all men.

The Germans, who came in large numbers, were of different denominations of Christians, principally Lutheran and German Reformed, with some Mennonites, Dunkards, Moravians, Amish and others. They were orderly, industrious and frugal farmers, peaceful and honest in their relations and dealings; a people that emphatically minded their own business, and made continual accessions to their wealth.

The third race—with which we are more immediately concerned—were the Scotch and Scotch-Irish, who constituted a considerable portion of the early settlers of Pennsylvania, and from whom the greater portion of the audience before me are descended. It may not be inappropriate before proceeding further to refer briefly to the history of this race previous to their emigration to our shores, and I do this the more readily inasmuch as I have found in my intercourse with the people that, beyond the fact that they came principally from the north of Ireland, little seems to be known of them; and this ignorance is common, even among their descendants.

During the Irish rebellions in the reign of Elizabeth, the province of Ulster, embracing the northern counties of Ireland, was reduced to the lowest extremity of poverty and wretchedness; and its moral and religious state was scarcely less deplorable than its

civil. Soon after the accession of James I., his quarrels with the Roman Catholics of that province led to a conspiracy against the British authority. O'Neill and O'Donnell, two Irish lords, who had been created earls by the English government—the former the Earl of Tyrone, and the latter the Earl of Tyrconnel—arranged a plot against the government. Its detection led these chief conspirators to fly the country, leaving their extensive estates—about 500,000 acres—at the mercy of the king, who only wanted a pretext for taking possession. A second insurrection soon gave occasion for another large forfeiture,and nearly six entire counties in the province of Ulster were confiscated and subjected to the disposal of the crown. But it was a territory which showed the effects of a long series of lawless disturbances. It was almost depopulated, its resources wasted, and the cultivation of the soil in a great measure abandoned. The state of society—such as existed--was in keeping with the physical aspect of the country.

It became a favorite project with the king to repeople those counties with a Protestant population, who would be disposed to the arts of peace and industry; the better to preserve order, to establish more firmly the British rule, and to introduce a higher state of cultivation into that portion of his domains. To promote this object, liberal offers of land were made, and other inducements held out in England and Scotland for colonists to occupy this wide and vacant territory. This was about the year 1610. The project was eagerly embraced, companies and colonies were formed, and individuals without organization were tempted to partake of the advantageous offers of the government. A London company

—among the first to enter upon this new acquisition—established itself at Derry, and gave such character to the place as to cause it to be known and called the city of London-Derry.

The principal emigration however, was from Scotland. Its coast is within twenty miles of the County of Antrim in Ireland, and across this strait flowed from the north-east a large population distinguished for thrift, industry and endurance; and bringing with them their Presbyterianism and rigid adherence to the Westminster standards. They settled principally in the counties of Down, Londonderry and Antrim; and have given a peculiar and elevated character to that portion of the Emerald Isle.

This was the first Protestant population that was introduced into Ireland; and the Presbyterians of Scotland, who thus furnished the largest element, have maintained their ascendency to the present day, against the persevering efforts of the government church on the one hand, and the Romanists, by whom they were surrounded, on the other. The first Presbyterian church established in Ireland was in the county of Antrim, in 1613.

The province, in consequence of this influx of population, greatly revived and continued for some years to advance in prosperity. The towns were replenished with inhabitants, the lands were cleared, and houses erected throughout the country.

But it was a day in which the throne of Britain was governed by bigotry and despotism. Persecutions of an oppressive nature began in Ulster in 1661,and every expedient—short of utter extirpation—was tried to break down the attachment of the people to their Presbyterian polity; but, as is always the case, these persecutions only at-

tached the people the stronger to their faith. Many ministers were deposed and forced to return to Scotland.

The tide however presently changed. Persecutions ceased in Ireland and the scene was transferred to Scotland. The latter Stuarts—Charles II. and James II.—blind to the dictates of justice and humanity, pursued a system of measures best calculated to wean from their support their Presbyterian subjects, who were bound to them by national prejudice and had been most devoted to their kingly cause, and to whose assistance Charles II. owed his restoration to the throne. Sir James Grahame, better known as Claverhouse, was sent to Scotland with his dragoons upon the mistaken mission of compelling the Presbyterians to conform in their religious worship to that of the establishment; and from 1670, until the accession of William and Mary, the Presbyterians of Scotland worshiped in hidden places, and at the peril of their lives.

The attempts to establish "the Church of England" over Scotland, and destroy the religious system so universally established and so dearly cherished by that devoted people, were pursued by the Charleses and James II. by persecutions as mean, cruel, and savage as any which have disgraced the annals of religious bigotry and crime. Many were treacherously and ruthlessly butchered, and the ministers were prohibited under severe penalties from preaching, baptizing or ministering in any way to their flocks.

Worn out with unequal contest, these persistent and enduring Presbyterians, having suffered to the extreme of cruelty and oppression, abandoned the land of their birth and sought an asylum among their countrymen who had preceded them in the secure re-

treats of Ulster; and thither they escaped as best they could, some crossing the narrow sea in open boats. They carried their household goods with them, and their religious peculiarities became more dear in their land of exile for the dangers and sorrows through which they had born them.

This is the race—composed of various tribes, flowing from different parts of Scotland—which furnished the population in the north of Ireland, familiarly known as the Scotch-Irish. This term Scotch-Irish does not denote an admixture of the Scotch and Irish races. The one did not intermarry with the other. The Scotch were principally Saxon in blood and Presbyterian in religion; the native Irish Celtic in blood and Roman Catholic in religion; and these were elements which could not very readily coalesce. Hence the races are as distinct in Ireland at the present day, after the lapse of two centuries and a half, as when the Scotch first took up their abode in that island. They were called Scotch-Irish simply from the circumstance that they were the descendants of Scots, who had taken up their residence in the north of Ireland.

I may observe that the term "Scotch-Irish"—although expressive—is purely American. In Ireland it is not used. There, in contra-distinction to the native or Celtic Irish, they are called Scotch.

These people, by their industry, frugality and skill, made the region into which they thus moved comparatively a rich and flourishing country. They improved agriculture, and introduced manufactures, and by the excellence and high reputation of their productions attracted trade and commerce to their markets.

The government, however, soon be-

gan to recognize them in the shape of taxes and embarrassing regulations upon their industry and trade. These restrictions, together with an extravagant advance in rents by landlords whose long lease had now expired, occasioned much distress, and the people were brought to a state of degrading subjection to England, and many of them reduced to comparative poverty.

Their patience was at length exhausted, and these energetic and self-willed Scotch-Irish, animated by the same spirit which subsequently moved the American mind in the days of the Revolution, determined no longer to endure these oppressive measures, and they sought by another change of residence to find a freer field for the exercise of their industry and skill, and for the enjoyment of their religion.

Ireland was not the home of their ancestors; it was endeared to them by no traditions, and numbers of them determined to quit it, and seek in the American wilds a better home than they had in the old world.

Accordingly, about the beginning of the eighteenth century they commenced to emigrate to the American colonies in large numbers. The spirit of emigration—fostered no doubt by the glowing accounts sent home by their countrymen who had preceded them—seized these people to such an extent that it threatened almost a total depopulation. Such multitudes of husbandmen, laborers and manufacturers flocked over the Atlantic that the landlords began to be alarmed and to concert ways and means for preventing the growing evil. Scarce a ship sailed for the colonies that was not crowded with men, women and children. They came for a time principally to Pennsylvania; although some of them settled in New England,

and others found their way to the Carolinas. It is stated by Proud, in his history of Pennsylvania, that by the year 1729 six thousand Scotch-Irish had come to that colony, and that before the middle of the century nearly twelve thousand arrived annually for several years. In September, 1736, alone, one thousand families sailed from Belfast on account of the difficulty of renewing their leases.

They were Protestants, and generally Presbyterians—few or none of the Catholic Irish came until after the Revolution. The settlement of this latter class in this country is comparatively of modern date.

Extensive emigrations from the northern countries of Ireland were principally made at two distinct periods of time; the first—of which I have been speaking—from the year 1718 to the middle of the century; the second, from about 1771 to 1773, although "there was a gentle current westward between these two eras."

The cause of this second extensive emigration was somewhat similar to that of the first. It is well known that a greater portion of the lands in Ireland is owned by a comparatively small number of proprietors, who rent them to the farming classes on long leases. In 1771, the leases on an estate of the county of Antrim—the property of the Marquis of Donegal—having expired, the rents were so largely advanced that many of the tenants could not comply with the demands, and were deprived of the farms they had occupied. This aroused a spirit of resentment to the oppression of the large landed proprietors, and an immediate and extensive emigration to America was the consequence. From 1771 to 1773 there sailed from the ports in the north of Ire-

land nearly one hundred vessels, carrying as many as twenty-five thousand passengers, all Presbyterians. This was shortly before the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, and these people, leaving the old world in such a temper, became a powerful contribution to the cause of liberty and to the separation of the colonies from the mother country.

These Scotch-Irish emigrants landed principally at NewCastle and Philadelphia, and found their way northward and westward into the eastern and middle counties of Pennsylvania. From thence one stream followed the great Cumberland valley into Virgina and North Carolina, and from these colonies passed into Kentucky and Tennessee. Another powerful body went into western Pennsylvania, and, settling on the headwaters of the Ohio, became famous both in civil and ecclesiastical history, and have given to the region around Pittsburg the name it so well deserves, of being the backbone of Presbyterianism.

The first settlement in this region of country was made by the Scotch-Irish about the year 1718. They gradually spread over the whole western portion of Chester county, from Maryland and Delaware on the south to the chain of hills known as the Welsh mountain on the north; and the greater portions of the population of this district of country at the present day are their descendants. These early emigrants planted the Presbyterian churches at Upper Octorara, Faggs Manor, Brandywine Manor, New London and Oxford, in this county; and these churches abide in strength to the present day.

It is said to be a hard thing to kill a Presbyterian Church, and this is exemplified not only in those planted in this county, but throughout the coun-

try. Of course, this is only true as a general rule. Presbyterian churches may—from emigration and other causes—become weakened and eventually cease to exist, but it will be found on examination that they are more tenacious of life than those of any other denomination.

Such is a brief sketch of the early history of the people known as the Scotch-Irish, and of their emigration and settlement in this country.

This race, "in energy, enterprise, intelligence, education, patriotism, religious and moral character, the maintenance of civil and religious liberty, and inflexible resistance to all usurpation in church and state, was not surpassed by any class of settlers in the American colonies."

In the struggle for popular rights they were ever found on the side of the people, and the maintenance of freedom in religious worship was with them a cardinal principle.

Pennsylvania owes much of what she is to-day to the fact that so many of these people settled within her borders. Probably not less than five millions of people in America have the blood of these Scotch and Scotch-Irish in their veins, and there is not one of them, man or woman, that is not proud of it, or that would exchange it for any other lineage.

"The first public voice in America for dissolving all connections with Great Britain," says Bancroft, "came from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians." A large number of them were signers of the Declaration of Independence, and throughout the revolution they were devoted to the cause of the country. Such a thing as a Scotch-Irish tory was unheard of; the race never produced one. It was the energy and devotion of this people that sustained

the army in the field in the many dark hours of that contest, and which under the guidance of Providence carried this country successfully through the struggle for freedom.

When the subject of the dissolution of all connection between the colonies and the mother country was before the Continental Congress it was John Witherspoon, a Scotch Presbyterian clergyman, and a descendant of John Knox, who is reported to have said, "That noble instrument on your table, which secures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in this house. He who will not respond to its accents, and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions, is unworthy the name of freeman. Although these gray hairs must descend into the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather they would descend thither by the hand of the public executioner than desert, at this crisis, the sacred cause of my country!"—words which were potent in securing the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

Many of the most eminent men in the nations are and have been of this race. It has furnished five Presidents of the United States, seven Governors of Pennsylvania, a majority of the legislators, State and national, and of those who have occupied other high official positions.

In the church we may well be proud of the names of those who have ministered at her altars. A race which has produced such men as John Witherspoon, the Tennants,father and sons, Samuel and John Blair,Francis Alison, the Duffields, the Alexanders, Robert Smith and his sons, Samuel Stanhope Smith and John Blair Smith has proven that it is not of ignoble blood, and that it is second to none on the

face of the earth with which it may be compared.

The race is noted for its firmness, perseverance and undaunted energy in whatever it undertakes, and those characteristics have aided in carrying it successfully through many a conflict. Whatever an individual with Scotch blood predominating in his veins undertakes he generally performs, if in his power.

When John Knox was laid in his grave the Earl of Morton—then recently appointed regent—who stood by, is said to have pronounced his eulogium in these or similar words: "There lies he who never feared the face of man." And what was true of John Knox may be said of the race, "It never shrinks from responsibilities, and it fears not the face of man."

Its character for firmness—perhaps it might be called stubbornness—is somewhat facetiously, but well, illustrated in the prayer of the Scotch elder, who besought the Lord that he might be always right, adding, "for thou knowest, Lord, that I am very hard to turn," or, as expressed in the Scottish dialect, "ye ken, Lord, that I am unco hard to turn."

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