

This remarkable man, whose memory will be cherished as long as the German race exists in Pennsylvania, is a descendant in the fifth generation of Hupert KASSEL, who came to this country about 1715. Johannes KASSEL, who settled at Germantown in 1686, was probably an uncle of old Hupert. Among the earlier KASSELS living at Krieshiem on the Rhine were some who became noted as zealous preachers of the Mennonite faith, and authors doing good service in the controversial literature of their day. Confessions of faith and poems in the handwriting of those worthy forefathers, who lived and died over two hundred years ago, are still preserved by their descendants.

On the maternal side Abraham H. CASSEL is the great-grandson of Christopher SAUR, the celebrated printer of Germantown, whose glory it is, not so much that he stood at the head of the men of his race, and wielded a potent influence in all the affairs of the province, as that he printed the Bible in German in Pennsylvania forty years before it was issued in English anywhere in America. Those who believe in the permanence of inherited characteristics may see in these facts a cause for the growth of literary tastes in Mr. CASSEL. But however correct this theory may be, it is certain that no germ ever struggled forward into the light of day under more adverse circumstances than in this instance.

He was born in Towamencin Township, Montgomery County, on the 21st of September, 1820, and reared in an interior German settlement, at such a distance from the outside world that only in very recent years has a railroad approached within five miles of his residence; among a people whose highest ambition is the accumulation of land, which they only acquired by hard labor and rugged self-denial; and whose sole literary food is the Bible or sermon of the Dunker or Mennonite preacher--a farmer, like themselves. His immediate ancestors and parents were plain and worth people, whose views of life were limited to the sowing of the seed and the gathering in of the harvest; and who felt in their consciences that to permit a child to spend his time over books was to start him upon that broad way which leads to destruction.

When Abraham was a few years old his grandfather used to take him on his knee and tell him of the days when the Revolutionary army was encamped on the Perkiomen and Skippack, and it was the impression made by these incidents which first awakened within him the desire to learn, and gave his mind an antiquarian bent. His father, finding that his

fondness for books was increasing, and fearing that it would lead him entirely away from useful labor, sternly endeavored to repress it. Fire, money and light were denied him, and even the rod was not spared in the effort to crush the supposed evil propensity. The boy was therefore compelled to pursue his studies by stealth, as he had opportunity--in the wagon-house, in the hay-mow, and late at night while others were asleep. About six weeks' tuition at a country school-house was all the instruction he ever received. In childhood he learned to speak the 'patois' called Pennsylvania Dutch, but has since taught himself German and English, in both of which languages he is entirely proficient. He has also some acquaintance with Dutch, Latin, French and Greek. He learned to write with a chicken feather, which a kind relative showed him how to split at the point. When a young man he began to teach school, and in this occupation continued for eight years. While boarding around in the farmers' houses, in lieu of salary, as was then the custom, he found the opportunity of his life in learning the whereabouts of those rare old tomes, long since neglected and forgotten, which the religious enthusiasts who settled Pennsylvania brought with them across the Atlantic, or reprinted here for their spiritual delectation. In early youth he began to invest his spare earnings in books, and now, at the age of fifty-eight, he has a library of over ten thousand volumes, which is in some respects one of the most remarkable in the world, and in its own particular specialties stands entirely along. It would be impossible within the limits of such a notice as this to give an adequate idea of his valuable collection. It is in the main a theological and historical library in English and German, though not confined to those subjects or languages. In the works of the fathers of the Church of the Reformed of the sixteenth century, and in early printed Bibles, it is particularly rich. The literature of the Dunker church, specimens of which are difficult to find elsewhere, is here seen entire. It contains much literary 'bic-a-brac' such as a copy of the works of John BUNYAN in folio, 1736, having on its title-page the autograph of George WHITEFIELD; a ponderous folio Bible, which was chained to the pulpit in the parish of South Cowden, England; the marriage certificate of Henry FREY and Anna Catharine LEVERING, dated Second-month (April) 26th, 1692; manuscripts in the handwriting of Francis Daniel PASTORIUS, the "Pennsylvania Pilgrim"; and of Johannes KELPINS, the learned "Hermit of the Wissahickon."

Here also is the celebrated proclamation of

WASHINGTON, issued 1777, directing the farmers to thresh out their grain.

Its chief value to the scholar, however, and its principal interest for the man of general culture, consists in the fact that it is substantially complete and almost the only collection of early German publications of this country--books, pamphlets, and ephemera. Here, and here alone, may be found all the rare imprints of Christopher SAUR, of Germantown, including the three quarto Bibles of 1743, 1763, and 1776, and about one hundred and fifty other volumes and pamphlets; the "Geistliches Magazin," which was the first religious magazine of the country; files of the newspaper which was also the first of the country; and a complete set of German almanacs beginning with 1738 and reaching down to the present day. Here is also the fullest collection in existence of the still more rare Ephrata imprints, and among them an unusually fine copy of Van BRAGHT's "Martyrer Spiegel," the noblest specimen of American colonial bibliography, and a lasting monument to the religious zeal of the Mennonites. FRANKLIN, ARMBRUSTER, MILLER, LEIBERT, BILLMEYER,, and all the early Pennsylvania printers, have alike contributed their abundant volumes and pamphlets. In fact, it may be said with substantial truth that to the patient research and unwearied enthusiasm of this unassuming man, we owe the preservation of the history of the Germans of Pennsylvania. SEIDENSTICKER, RUPP, JONES, HARBAUGH, WEISER, and others, have written meritoriously and ably, but away back at a farm-house near Harleysville, in Montgomery County, is the well from which the waters have been drawn. It would be unjust to Mr. CASSEL to call him technically a "collector," a name generally given to a man who pays a large price for the privilege of transferring a rare book from a shelf where it is of no use to another where it is equally valueless. His work has been largely creative, and his volumes have in many instances been saved by him from destruction. From garrets, in which they were lost; from spring-house lofts and granaries, where they were the prey of the storm; and from the waste packages of the country grocer, his materials have often been rescued. In the search for his treasures he has traveled thousands of miles, and of times a book has only been made complete by putting together fragments found in widely separated localities, and when secured they have not lain idle, but become the subject of his deepest study and source of his greatest delight. To him the humble emigrant of the time of PENN, sallying from his log cabin to reclaim the forest while his thoughts were busied with the trials of that long journey from the Rhine, the forgotten pastor who tended his little flock a century and a half ago, are as familiar in the events of their lives as is the present owner of the adjacent farm.

To him the past, like the sea of which we are told, has given up the dead which were in it, and with a generosity as unselfish as it is rare, his information is at the service of all who care to seek it.

Mr. CASSEL's reputation has extended to all parts of the world wherever men are enlightened enough to take an interest in books. He has been a member of the Pennsylvania Historical Society since 1858, and has contributed valuable articles to its publications. On the 1st of April, 1843, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Issachar and Elizabeth RHODES, and they have eight children. In addition to his library he owns a farm of seventy-five acres, and by industry and frugality has accumulated what is considered a competence by the unpretentious people among whom he lives.

His decent from the emigrant, Hupert KASSEL, is traced they: From Hupert to Yellis, and from the latter to Hupert again, and from Hupert of the third generation back once more to Yellis of the fifth, who as the father of Abraham H. CASSEL of the sixth. Abraham H. and Elizabeth CASSEL's eight children, of the sixth generation, are named as follows: Yellis, the eldest, is married to Sarah HARLEY, and they have two children living, Edwin and Elizabeth, they occupying the homestead and farming the place; Henry, the second child, died when only seven years of age; Sarah, the third, is intermarried with Daniel BOORSE, and now (1870) resides at Lanark, Illinois; the next, Mary Ellen, died in her fourth year; Priscilla, the fifth, is the wife of Levi STAUFFER, and they have five children, Abraham, Yellis, Elizabeth, Clayton, and Laurence; the sixth, seventh and eight are Amanda, Hannah, and Rosalinda, respectively. Hannah received a liberal education at a normal school.

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