

**THE GERMAN ELEMENT  
OF THE SHENANDOAH  
VALLEY OF VIRGINIA**

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The German Element  
of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Preface.

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One who was born in the Shenandoah Valley, who has dwelt there during the greater portion of his life to the present, and who is by blood three-fourths German or German-Swiss, may doubtless be excused for writing about the German Element in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. He may also be excused, perhaps, for regarding such a subject as naturally attractive, and for believing that it is well worthy of careful investigation. As a matter of fact, the field has proved most fruitful: so much so that the writer has been surprised at the abundance and wealth of material that may be secured for historical, economical, sociological, political, religious, linguistic, and even literary studies. He hastens to say, however, for the reassurance of the reader, that he has not attempted to follow out all these lines of investigation in the present treatise: what he has attempted is merely a plain, unvarnished picture of the people in their homes, in their churches, in their schools, in their fields and workshops, and in the larger relations of church and state as affected by peace and war. As preliminary to this picture, a brief account of the exploration and settlement of the country has been deemed necessary and appropriate.

In addition to a natural inclination toward the subject in hand, the writer has felt in some measure what he is pleased to call a sense of duty. It is a patent fact that the German element in Virginia—and that chiefly means the Germans in northwestern Virginia—is a subject that has received but slight attention, either in the thought and literature of our larger Virginia, or in the thought and concern of the German element itself. And the fact is not singular. The prevailing element of our State is English; our language is English:

and not even a German would have it anything else: hence our books and our thought are English and of England. So the fact is not singular that the German element of the Valley of Virginia and adjacent sections should be overlooked in the more familiar life and interests of the larger part. It is only analogous to the larger fact in our country as a whole. The German fifth or fourth of our American nation is often forgotten—we love old England so well. And yet the student at least should not be so forgetful—he loves the German schools too well. Hugo Münsterberg is reported as saying that the German and American nations are more alike, in mind and temperament, than any other two nations of earth, and must eventually adopt the same form of civilization and government.<sup>1</sup> We hesitate to accept this statement in its entirety, because Münsterberg is a German, and Germans are apt to be enthusiastic; but we do put a good deal of confidence in what Andrew D. White says; for he is one of us. Mr. White says: "Although Great Britain is generally honored as the mother of the United States, Germany has, from an intellectual standpoint, become more and more the second mother of the United States. More than any other country, Germany has made the universities and colleges of America what they are to-day—a powerful force in the development of American civilization."<sup>2</sup> In view of these facts, therefore, the writer feels like saying a word for his own kind and to them. He is gratified, moreover, to observe a gradual awakening of conscience, so to speak, among them. A few have always kept the faith, and have tried to keep the language, though against overwhelming odds; but lately—and this is the gratifying fact—many of the young men and women of the Valley of Virginia, in whose families the language and literature of the Fatherland have been practically dead for two or three generations, are now turning back to them in their courses of higher

<sup>1</sup>The Inglenook, Elgin, Ill., of recent date.

<sup>2</sup>Report of U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1901, vol. I, p. 543.



education, and are taking up for their own accomplishment and culture what their great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers tried to get rid of as soon as possible, in order to be like other people.

In enumerating the sources from which the facts presented in this treatise have been gathered, the writer ventures to mention first his own life and experience among the people of whom he writes, together with a first-hand acquaintance—often familiarity—with nearly every locality named. For definite facts of time and place, relating to the early settlements, the archives of the several counties of the Valley and adjacent sections have been consulted: namely, in the order of their organized establishment, Spotsylvania (1721), Orange (1734), Frederick (1743), Augusta (1745), Shenandoah (1772), Rockingham (1778). In Rockingham County many of the earliest records were destroyed, or partly destroyed, by fire during the Civil War; but the burnt records have many of them been restored to a serviceable form. In Spotsylvania County, also, the records suffered considerably, if not from hostile soldiery, at least from the “underground” methods necessary for their hiding. Although the valley of the Shenandoah was first settled while the district was still a part of Spotsylvania County, I have not been able to find any references in the records of this county to persons or places in the Valley. There are, however, frequent entries referring to the Germans of Germanna; to some that must have lived in the territory now constituting Madison County; as well as to a few that seem to have been locating about Fredericksburg. In the counties of Orange, Frederick, Augusta, and Shenandoah the records, at least of deeds and wills, are complete, almost without exception. Many of the original documents in these counties were written and presented in German script; and I am told that in Frederick County some of them, like so many German family names, have suffered not a little in the translation and transcription by English clerks; and I have no

doubt that the same is true to a greater or less degree in the other counties also.

As sources for the earliest history of the Valley, I have found most valuable a series of documents edited and annotated by Mr. Charles E. Kemper of Washington City, and published during the past year or two in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*: "The Early Westward Movement of Virginia, 1722-1734, As Shown by the Proceedings of the Colonial Council." These documents, together with the series of Moravian Diaries covering some ten years in the middle of the eighteenth century, translated from the German and annotated by Mr. Kemper and Prof. William J. Hinke of Philadelphia, and published recently in the same magazine, furnish a substantial basis for the historical study of beginnings in the Valley section. Hening's Statutes at Large have been found a rich storehouse of facts and figures for the first three-quarters of a century of Valley history. These, together with Palmer's Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Stanard's Virginia Colonial Register, and Kennedy's Journals of the House of Burgesses, have been freely consulted. Among the many other publications that have been found helpful, two must be mentioned here: John Lederer's Journal, translated by Sir William Talbot and printed first in London in 1672; and Prof. I. D. Rupp's Collection of Thirty Thousand Names of German, Swiss, Dutch, and other Immigrants to Philadelphia, from 1727 to 1776.

All of the publications above mentioned will be found enumerated and briefly described in the appended Bibliography. To this bibliography special attention is invited. In it two things have been attempted: first, an atonement for the necessary brevity of this treatise; second, some real help in practical form to those who may wish to follow out the present subject in any particular lines. It is hoped that the latter object at least may be regarded as in some measure accomplished.

Among the individuals in different parts of the country

who have given valuable assistance in the preparation of this monograph, I gratefully mention the following:

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As opportunity is afforded in the succeeding pages, I shall gladly make specific acknowledgment to as many as possible of the more than one hundred other persons who have contributed facts, either personally or in writing.

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