

Said May, "I wish I had the wealth
Of that bright star up there."
I took the hint, and now she wears
A diamond solitaire.

A STRANGE PEOPLE.

Without doubt the average Pennsylvanian knows more of the Mormons of Utah, or of the fantastic actions of some new religious sect in a distant State, than of the Amish (pronounced Omish), a people of far greater historical interest, and of equally strange customs, who are located in a secluded nook at the very centre of our populous Commonwealth and scarcely fifteen miles from State College. Their home is in the Kishacoquillas, one of the many small and picturesque valleys of the Allegheny mountains. Because of their unobtrusive ways and the quiet valley which supplies their simple wants, the Amishmen are but little known, even by their neighbors of the surrounding district.

Their sect was founded in Europe in the stormy times of Martin Luther. Their forefathers were originally followers of that old-world sect known as Mennonites, or followers of Simon Menno, who were driven from Switzerland to America because of the religious persecutions in that country during the 17th century. Shortly after coming to America there was a division among the people, some thinking the rules of the church far too lax. As a result, a number of the people banded themselves together and followed Peter Ammen to the Kishacoquilla valley, where they obtained a large tract of land by purchase and governmental grant and established the present Amish community.

The patient toil of several generations of these frugal and industrious people has made the valley a garden. Generations of quiet, rural life and total abstinence from dissipation have given them an almost perfect physique, and the youth of both sexes are usually handsome in features as well as form.

The first precept of their society is non-progressiveness, and so well have they kept it that should some entire community have slept ten times Van Winkle's sleep they would find themselves, upon awaking, more in keeping with modern progress than this community of the Amish.

These people, though not inhospitable, are very difficult of approach. They fear the stranger's questioning gaze, and are reticent on all questions as to their mode of worship.