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AN INCIDENT

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AN INCIDENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE GERMANS IN MARYLAND.

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by Jno. G. Morris.

IN the year 1775 an Englishman named J. F. D. Smyth, Esq., travelled through this country and in 1784 published his tour in London under the title: "A Tour through the United States of America." His experience in our neighboring city of Fredericktown was somewhat singular and this topical fact renders it interesting to us as a society, because it falls directly in the line of our researches. We owe to the unamiable humor of this Englishman a genre picture, though somewhat in the style of a caricature, of the political relation of the Germans in that place in those days.

This man Smyth, a surgeon, travelled through this country when the colonists had lost their patience with the mother country and the uprising against England broke out. Smyth was also excited, but only at the unspeakable presumption and stupid unreasonableness of the subjects of his majesty, George III. Hence it was no wonder, that collisions and conflicts ensued and that Smyth was by many regarded as a spy. His conduct made him a martyr to his loyal opinions, — he was in consequence rather roughly treated by the Germans, on whom he vents his pardonable indignation.

In 1775 he came to Fredericktown where the armed colonists were undergoing a review. It appears that he was known, and he was ordered to appear next morning before a revolutionary committee. The English tourist did not feel himself secure, — he did not comply with the order, but suddenly and secretly left the town. He went as far as Hagerstown, but everywhere he found Germans, whose appearance was by no means agreeable to him. While he was spending the night, six miles from Hagerstown, he was overtaken

and captured by a guard sent after him,—Nov. 19th, 1775. He calls them "unfeeling German scoundrels, upon whose brows are written assassination, murder and death." He was taken back to Hagerstown, where he was visited by many persons and then he was led back to Fredericktown with drum and fife, playing the rogues' march. Here he was treated barbarously, as he says: "They dragged me before a committee, which consisted of a tailor, a leather breeches maker, a shoemaker, a gingerbread baker, a butcher and two tavernkeepers. The majority were Germans and I was subjected to a very remarkable hearing, as follows: —

One said, "You infernal rascal, how darst you make an exshkape from this honorable committee?" "Fer fluchter Dyvel," cried another, "how can you shtand so shtyff for king Shorsh akainst dis koontry?" "Sacrament," yelled another, "dis committee will make Shorsh know, how to behave himself," and the butcher exclaimed, "I would kill all the English tieves as soon as ich would kill an ox or a cow."

And here as far as the Germans of Fredericktown are concerned, the curtain falls. But what we here see, is but a small part of the history of those times. Many of the Germans joined the party of the revolutionists and would not allow themselves to be trifled with. Smyth's book removes all doubt on that subject, and he takes occasion to ventilate his indignation against it. Let him have this satisfaction. These plain mechanics were an abomination to him and he took a sort of malicious delight in saying, "that he did not need neither coat nor breeches, that he hated gingerbread, and could not bear butchers and tavern keepers."

He was kept under arrest seven weeks and was to be transported to Philadelphia. He escaped at night and endured much, suffering and privation, — he crossed the Alleghanies, but was re-captured in January 1776. The Committee of Safety in Philadelphia kept him in security for a year, finally he was released and restored to his friends.

