



*Little Known Facts  
About*

# *The* AMISH

AND THE MENNONITES

A Study of the Social Customs and Habits of Pennsylvania's "Plain People"

By AMMON MONROE AURAND, Jr.

*Author of*

"Little Known Facts About Bundling in the New World," &c.

*"Nobody could do a better job."—Phila. Inquirer.*

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## AN AMISHMAN WRITES

(The author is pleased to print a letter which he received from one of the best informed and best known members of the Amish sect in America. His letter was unsolicited, and since it bears on a subject which we discussed in our writings, we thought the reader would like to sense what our Amish friend has to say after reading the pamphlet. We are glad to make the note he suggested. If the rest of us lived within our means as do the Amish, we would appreciate the old song: "Every Little Bit Added to What You Got, Makes Just a Little Bit More." In other words we'd always have "tobacco in our old tobacco box."—The Author).

The letter:

Ephrata, R. D., Pa.,  
August 15, 1939.

Ammon Monroe Aurand, Jr.,  
Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Friend: I received your book, "Little Known Facts About the Amish," and note you know a lot about the plain people that may benefit them when published. . . .

First, I want to tell you, there are no daily baths, where there is no bathroom equipment. It is being done more in the manner as our veterinarian expressed himself at one time, thus: "Here we have these scientific methods of medical treatment, daily baths, etc." He said, "I know of a man who said he wants to get to be 100 years old; he took a cold water bath every morning and at the age of 65 he died of cancer in the stomach. And here we have people who wouldn't take a bath unless they get caught in a thunderstorm, and not change clothing until they rot from their backs and they grow up to an old stone age." I don't mean this latter statement about changing clothing, that our people are doing same, only the bathing, and I want to say our people are doing a mite better than the Dr.'s expression. Baths are just taken whenever one feels they need one, with a common tub or any other convenient article. And our health is not so much affected as some people might think. . .

Always at your service to promote better understanding between our people and others.

Yours truly,

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.



## THESE ODD FOLK CALLED "AMISH"

(In preparing this study of the "plain people" the author has had opportunity to draw heavily from a general knowledge of them, by intimate contact and otherwise, as well as from a rich store of information to be found in numerous books and magazines, and such as issue from the pens of various contributors to the German folk societies. These would be too numerous to mention here, though it is deemed fitting to give general credit to them in this way, since they justify many of our findings, and in turn they authenticate their own).<sup>1</sup>

ISN'T IT TRUE that the average person likes to know something odd or curious about the "other fellow," while assuming that there is little or nothing odd about himself?

Isn't it true that neither the Red Man, nor the Black, nor any other in America, present social studies as interesting or entertaining as the Germans settled in Pennsylvania—so-called Pennsylvania "Dutch?" Of these types there are many communities where the peculiarities of these people are strange and interesting enough to furnish constant material for the magazines, newspapers, novels, plays, etc.

There are perhaps none so quaint or odd, as the so-called "plain people" of the southern counties of the State. Lancaster is especially rich in this lore, but other counties are plentifully populated with these "sects" which make Pennsylvania more or less out-standing in America.

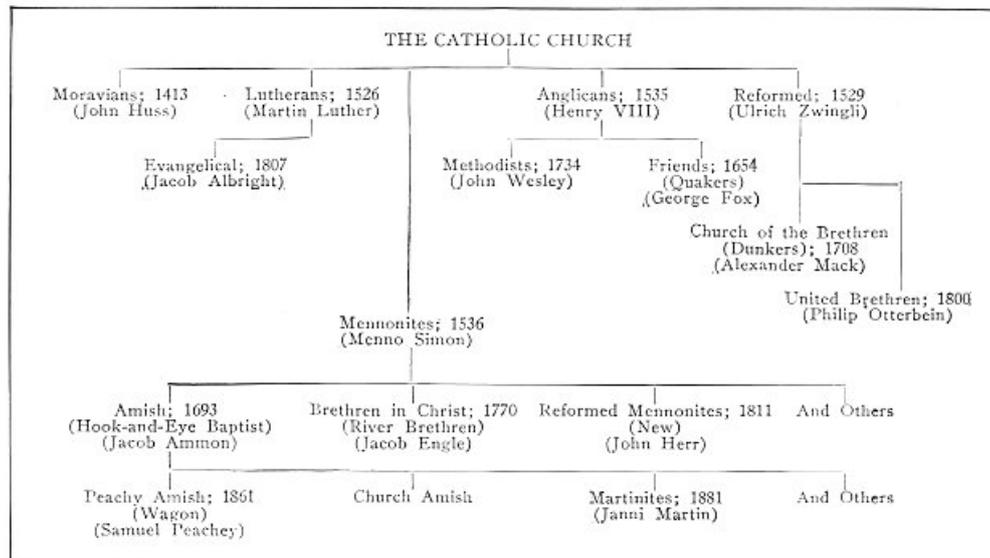
To understand the background of these people, one should read a great deal of history, particularly religious history. The Mennonites and the Amish, and many others of similar persuasion, are what they are because of their religion hardly for any other reason.

But, like you and I, they must live twenty-four hours every day, and it is in these twenty-four hours that they live in such a way as to provide for the non-sectarian a curiosity to know more about the people with the broad hats and old-fashioned bonnets.

<sup>1</sup> See "Historical Account of the Amish and Mennonites" on page 28.

We generalize somewhat in the inclusion of several of the plain sects in this account, although specifically we ought to say that "the Amish do so and so;" or, "the Mennonites," or whatever they may be. Generally it must be taken to mean that the extremists in this account are the Amish.

It is a comprehensive social study of them that we give you now—in a brief, condensed version!



Mennonite Genealogy



## QUAINTNESS OF HAIR STYLES AND DRESS ATTRACT ATTENTION

**General Appearance.**—The Amish garb is peculiar to him and his kind. It is dictated in style by their old leaders and deviations are rare.

Jews, Catholics and the plain people alike prefer not to let any other faith get a hold on their off-spring until after they have lived through formative years.

The plain people garb themselves not in the manner of the Jew, (whom they unconsciously imitate in many ways—as do all Christians), but after the priests and nuns. The older leaders of the plain people imitated the Catholic clergyman in dress and in discipline, representative of a section of Europe following the Reformation.

**Hooks and Eyes** instead of buttons are used by Old Order Amish as a church regulation. Their clothes are plainer than those of the plainest Quaker, but the severity of regulations is somewhat modified among the Meeting House Amish.

The men's hats are a distinctive, broad, stiff-brimmed type—one looking just like another—dust and all!

It is the usual thing for Old Order Amish boys to wear their hats nearly all of the time, except while in school. At recess they cannot be persuaded to doff them while at play.

The trousers of an Amishman do not open in the middle by means of a fly, as do those of most every other male American. The plain man's pants open toward the sides, almost at the side seams, with a resultant wide flap in the front. They are called "broad fall."

Men may shine their shoes (if they wish), and the women may buy and wear polished machine-made footwear.

If one could get into a friendly and understanding discourse with men of this faith, as has been done occasionally, one would learn that buttons on the backs of coats, or on coat sleeves, were actually places

for the "devil to hang 'somesing' on." Buttons are made from the bones of animals, and this is one reason for their declining to use them.

Belts, neckties, sweaters and caps are taboo. Their coats are without the usual well-known collar. Some wear capes in cold weather, or perhaps great overcoats; at any rate they are monstrous garments—covering all like the top of a buggy covers the individual.

**Women's Garb.**—Women may be seen dressed in bright purple apron, orange neckerchief, or (on Sunday) white caps without ruffle; or borders and white neckerchiefs with gowns of sober woolen stuff, and all wearing aprons. Even a dark-eyed maiden of three years might have her sweet face encircled by the plain muslin cap, the little figure dressed in plain gown.

It is not compulsory for the young girls to wear their bonnets constantly, either at home, at school, or away from home.

Necessary jewelry, even gold eye-glasses, is allowed. The young girls are expected not to want to own or wear gold watches. Should they use them, discipline would follow.

Dress peculiarities grew out of an effort to follow Divine injunction, "Be not conformed to this world."

The drawers of the conservative plain women are very long, and quite tight. Seldom seen by non-Amish, at first glance they look like relics from the middle ages, rather than a convenience or need for the present.

The youngsters are dressed exactly after the pattern of their grandfathers and grandmothers, and it does seem strange to see such "little ladies" out and at play with a vigor found in boys—and in children of the care-free-world. But they wear dresses reaching to their shoe-tops, as soon as they are able to walk; a white cap, and white shoulder kerchief and a white apron add their unique touch.

Any children, neatly groomed to look like their parents at their best, have a chance of looking "cute."

There is only one style of wearing the hair among the Amish women, and that bears very little improvement. It is parted exactly in the middle and combed smoothly down toward the temples, where two plaits are started, carried around and gathered into a knot just under the edge of the white mull cap above the nape of the neck.

**Hair and Whiskers.**—One or two Amish countrymen, when seen in Lewistown, Lancaster or Ephrata, create little excitement, but when fifty or a hundred get together in a world outside their own, that's news.

Young men, as well as old, have their hair and whiskers neatly trimmed, and it seems always about the same color for all ages. Sandy, reddish, may we call it, and ruddy cheeks predominate. The hair is cut very neatly in a bang in front, or parted in the middle and slicked over the side to cover the ears.

The moustache is shaved off for the purpose of cleanliness in eating. Two verses from Leviticus settle the question: "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of they beard." (Lev. xix, 27; xxi, 5).



## AMISH IN MIFFLIN COUNTY ACCOUNTED LEADING CONSERVATIVES

The Amish of the Mifflin County Area are severely plain in "back-sections;" often without any modern conveniences; no blinds at windows or doors; no rugs; simple wearing apparel, home-made, or perhaps ordered through a specialist in the making thereof.

An informant says that these people have no pictures on the walls—only mottoes and gaudy calendars.

A woman of mature years, having a new home erected, on entering it one day discovered modern plumbing devices had been installed, and she forthwith ordered removal of same.

They eat enough, and of good variety, and their complexions appear quite superior to the "healthy appearances" obtained from boxes and jars which may be purchased in drug stores.

Church rules are not a matter of printed or written record, but of oral delivery or tradition among the Old Amish. It is not impossible that this condition may lead to unpleasant and unlooked-for results some day, if perhaps such has not been the case in more instances than have generally come to light.

If any of the young of the Old Amish marry outside the "faith," expulsion from membership will, and loss of inheritance may follow, unless the non-member also adopts the faith and garb. This applies only to the Meeting House Amish in cases where marriage takes place into families which are not non-resistant.

**Five "Varieties."**—Among the Amish in Mifflin county, Pennsylvania, there are five "varieties." They include the very conservative, known as the "Nebraskas," their women still wearing the old Shaker hats and avoiding bonnets, and whose men are not permitted to wear suspenders—to the branch that worships in regular meeting houses, and who have discarded nearly all restrictions, except the bonnet.

Then there are the "Peacheyites" (named for one of their number), who may wear a single suspender, if home-made. A group organized

by Abe Zook. Another group is permitted to wear store suspenders to hold up their trousers, but few other so-called "sinful pleasures of life."

These distinctions, they say, do not apply to Lancaster county Amish in this day and generation.

We are, however, familiar with the "one suspender" type.

**Children Sometimes Backward.**—Conditions among these people sometimes really require sympathy, especially among the young who sometimes hide themselves from the sight of "English" persons, making use of corn-shocks, or whatever they find handy.

This practice is not unusual among children of some other persuasions, where the parents have too much stunted their natural mental developments; but then, too, we do know it to be a too-common-practice of our "English" people to ridicule people of other origins. Persons, not of the Amish order, are English.



## AMISH AND MENNONITES ARE WORLD-FAMED AGRICULTURALISTS

**The Amish and Mennonites** are generally agriculturalists, which include grain, vegetables and that "horrible weed" tobacco! They are adepts at all they undertake and when drying season for tobacco is on their barns are testimony in this direction, at least.

**Plow Deep.**—If God has not been entirely responsible for the success of these people, the answer must lie in the fact that when they plowed, they plowed deeper, to keep the soil mellow; and when they cleared away forest land they went to work on the hardest of the trees as well as the smaller growth.

They didn't merely scratch the surface like the "despised Yankee," or "scotch" the larger trees like the Scotch-Irish and wait a few years for the tree to die!

Hard work and little play has made them at least some "jack," and working mostly in the soil they can more easily commune with their Creator.

They spurn hired help, perhaps for two or more reasons. One, they do not like to be masters of men; they would rather serve; two, servants are likely to lag and loaf, and not keep up with men interested in life and salvation—hence, no laborers, no labor difficulties.

**Their Barns.**—The barn is one of the most important spots on a plain man's property, if he be a farmer. Here he must store all his crops, and if the latter be bountiful as they usually are, the barns may be too small.

Depending as to what sect he adheres to, the barn may be the "meeting place" for all of his neighbors of the same "meeting." This may well be crowded, for the loads brought by fifty to sixty buggies would naturally make some con-course of people—and they generally are regular attendants.

The barn may be kept even better than the house, for the latter is only a place in which to eat and sleep, say the usual daily prayers, and occasionally have the meeting there instead of the barn.

**The Moon** plays a great part in the planting of the crops, placing of fence-posts, shingling of barns and houses, etc. It is a recognized fact among scientists that there may be more to the lore relative to the moon, than they have yet found out. Certainly the crops and general results of moon observance among these and other Pennsylvania Germans is too well-known to get worked-up over.

The almanac, with all the signs of the zodiac, and all the special days of the year, has an important place in the home.

**Buggies.**—One visitor tells about a meeting at one of the Amish homes. In the barn-yard stood some sixty-five yellow canvas-covered wagons or buggies, as nearly alike as two peas in a pod. The sight was suggestive of a wagon-factory—all models of the same pattern.

On inquiring from several of the owners, just how they distinguished one from another so nearly alike, one fellow replied: "Oh, we joost look at 'em; we know 'em!"

One said he could tell his wagon because the back of it was peppered full of shot-holes, a souvenir of a shooting-match his boys had one day at home—too near the barn. Another had a block nailed to the floor of his wagon for the comfort of his short-legged wife.

And so on and on, until the whole sixty-five were distinctly different one from the other. They carried no whips, other than hickory switches which were kept more or less hidden from sight.

**Freeholders.**—There is probably more property owned outright, among the plain peoples in the southern and sect-populated counties per capita, than perhaps among any others of like character in the State.

They generally do not borrow money, or, if they do, it is loaned without interest, for among them they have no desire to obtain interest thereon. It is rare that money is withheld if one needs it, and inquires from one who has it to spare.

Plain people have numerous notions in common. It appears that they have little time for either Negroes, lawyers or rum. They also believe that bad fences (poorly kept) cause trouble between neighbors.



## RELIGIOUS SERVICES ARE HELD IN THEIR HOUSES AND BARNES

**Meeting Places** are very plain; if it is an elaborate structure, it is an exception; plainness in everything being the general rule. They often are erected in the midst of, or what once was a grove of great trees; long rows of sheds being filled to over-flowing with teams; special stalls are reserved for the preachers.

On entering a meeting house one would see across a sea of bobinet-capped heads to the front, where sat the several ministers, generally among the older members, grey-bearded; their long hair parted in the middle and combed down quite smoothly, ending in curls over the ears. Hats hung on pegs driven into the walls.

**Line-Out Hymns.**—The preacher would line-out a hymn from a book most generally "Die Kleine Harfe"—a favorite with the Mennonites. The members would respond with vim and vigor—without the aid of any musical instrument. Organs or anything of a musical nature were strictly forbid-den; suggestions that a musical aid of some kind be obtained, have been known to split congregations wide open. Scripture forbade the use of the organ. Of course these singing methods were familiar from childhood, and frequent use made all of them adepts at singing praises.

After hymns they had readings of selections from the German Bible. The sermons would follow in a language suitable to the majority present—German, or dialect—rarely English. Not every outsider can forthwith apply himself to, or comprehend their "hymn-sings."

**Ministers and Bishops** are selected by placing a piece of paper in one of a number of Bibles; members are directed to select, and God determines through the Bible containing the slip with the words "This is the lot," who is to be minister among them—called from the plow, or whatever vocation he might have chosen to follow.

These preachers were presumed to have Divine inspiration and to be able to deliver forceful sermons without any preparation!

Each family among the plain people support themselves generally on their own efforts of farming the earth. They pay no salaries for their

preachers, for they all are potential ministers among them, hence need to pay, nor tithing for such purposes.

The Mennonites, however, have broadened out to such an extent that they have missionaries throughout the world, with some churches and ministers in India and South America.

Children five weeks old, and up, are old enough to attend meeting, and thus are allowed to mingle with others until attaining an age in life when they are able to determine for themselves that they can accept all teachings of His people, and declare that they are fit for baptism.

Married men sit in a separate section to the right, reserved exclusively for them; their male off-spring sitting at their right side. On the other side of the men, with an aisle generally between them, are the wives and to their sides the younger girls and children of tender years. The older persons, separate as to sex, you will see usually sitting about the center of the meeting, and apart, as is the custom of the Jews.

Sermons over, men reach for their hats, and women place their black bonnets over their white "prayer-caps," and thus out again into a more or less worldly atmosphere, having just been in the presence of God.

**Communion** are celebrated twice a year, following a previous meeting at which it is ascertained that there are no differences existing between any of the members, which would prevent their attending this solemn service. They have preaching in the forenoon followed by the Supper, which is a fully prepared meal. Then in the afternoon they have the feet-washing. Only on such occasions do they have two services in a day, with lunch between the two.

Baptism is Administered four weeks before communion, by trine pouring in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They are not baptized by immersion, as some would have you to believe.

**Ex-Communication.**—One of the take-offs of the Amish from the Catholic church, was its right to ex-communicate any of its members for infractions of conduct or church discipline. This was a special point of divergence between the followers of Jacob Ammon, and the other Mennonites, and concerned disobedient members, as taught in I

Corinthians v. 9-11; II Thes. iii, 14; Titus iii, 10, and incorporated into their confession of faith.

The Amish applied these to their daily life, while others held these injunctions to apply merely to the communion table. The separation was accomplished about 1698.

Thus, if a husband or wife committed any breach, they were barred from having further social intercourse, such as is natural in life, and it went so far as to prohibit eating together at the same table, and of course, sleeping in the same bed.

These prohibitions are hard for any one to bear, and while it kept many straight, it caused some of them to go over to some other branch that did not suffer them to be quite so circumspect.

Leaders or elders of the Old Order Amish are very strict about the ex-communication ban, and it is very "unhealthy" for the member in good standing to bid the time to any one who is under the ban. Among some of these people, it is a rule for them not to bid the time, nor to note the presence of another, should they be passing on a road, no matter who they are, or where they happen to be at the time. This naturally avoids errors in judgment.

One poor fellow in the middle West went amuck and killed his whole family because the operation of the ban prohibiting him from having anything at all to do with them, finally got the better of his mind, and his rash act resulted.

**Holidays.**—In the main their holidays are Christmas and Easter, but the Amish observe two days for the celebration, which idea they must get from the Jews, who sometimes are doubtful which day of two is meant to be celebrated, hence they celebrate both.

The two-day observance holds good in Germany and Switzerland today.

Shrove Tuesday before Lent means special attention must be given that day to preparation of "Fasnachts"—doughnuts to you. These may be round, and with the usual hole; square, oblong and quite narrow, or even triangular, some say.

At Christmas they do not give gifts like the rest of the Christian world. It would necessitate laying out money for things not necessary, aside from other reasons which they advance.

**Religious Education.**—Just about the first care of the plain people is that their children get a good religious education, therefore a place to worship, either private or public; then a school-house, and perhaps later among some of them, a place for higher education. (This does not apply to the Amish sect).

**Examples for Peace.**—These people certainly set a great example to those who would have peace among men—throughout the world. Their philosophy of refusing to fight for or against others, might set a good example for others to study.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should leave these people entirely to their own devices to work out their own salvation. They might solve a question on "Utopia" without costing the Commonwealth or the Federal government a single cent—besides both would be receiving revenue and no State or Federal expense during the experiment. They certainly appear a good risk from every angle.

**The World is Flat.**—This is a difference of opinion among some of these people as to the shape of the earth—whether it is round or flat. You will recall that conditions like this confronted even the most learned men up until the time of Columbus. Even since then there are men who will declare that the world, or earth, is flat.

Most maps are drawn in a way to indicate the surface as being flat, and when we have looked at our Bible maps and others, not globularly arranged, most any person would take it to be flat, because it was that way in the Bible!

Many people outside the Amish and Mennonite beliefs, are ready to believe that "everything" in the Bible, from cover to cover, is true—and you may be sure that one who is firmly convinced will interpret all passages according to his understanding.

**Dinners.**—At the dinners served at "meeting time" at the homes of members, when as many as two hundred gather at one time, it requires food and plenty of it. Naturally no one is prepared to serve

food on two hundred different dinner plates, and when many extra settings are necessary those awaiting the finishing of the previous table are already pretty hungry.

**"Moon Pies."**—Those attending these meetings are fed on "moon pies." The lower crust is rolled out to the usual pie-plate size, and the uncovered part of the crust laid up over the "contents." This forms a secure "pocket" for this type of content and is called a "moon" or "half-moon" pie. Hundreds of these are prepared on the Saturday before meeting.

To save time, as soon as the men are called they will pile into the kitchen, dropping hats one after another, more alike than two peas, on a window sill, and approach the table.

When they have been served the next table is accommodated, with the same plates and utensils, and cups and saucers as the first, most times without the formality of washing, and so on until the several tables have been served. In many homes today among non-Amish the common drinking-cup and perhaps other utensils are used time and again by different members of the family, without washing for days at a time.

Silent prayer is offered before any diner begins his meal, and again at the end.



## BUNDLING AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS ARE INTERESTING AND UNIQUE

**Births.**—Upon the birth of a son they make much ado, because he may be a plowman or a wagoner; if it is a girl there will be another one to milk the cows, or a lass who will get herself a husband who will be a good Amish or Mennonite amongst them. "To fear God and to love work" is the first lesson they teach their children.

When a man marries he asks not of the girl: "How much dowry can you bring with you?" but "Are you fit to be a good, industrious housewife and mother?"

**Bundling, or Courting in Bed.**<sup>2</sup> —The late Thaddeus Stevens once remarked that for every case of "bundling" in Lancaster county there were twenty cases in Vermont. Perhaps Thad. was qualified to make the statement, having lived a full and complete life of his own. But we wonder whether his statistics are reliable. Perhaps he just wanted to be quoted.

Bundling was condoned in the Old Testament, if one takes the time to look up the Book of Ruth to prove it; and if it was the custom then among the Jews for "men and women to lie on the same bed, as lovers, without undressing," then we have little doubt but that our plain friends used the same methods for getting couples into a convivial mood and a convenient embrace.

Our New England friends said that "bundling" was an "economic necessity" we prefer to believe that their prudishness made them say that, when in their hearts they knew that bundling was economically "convenient."

The plain people could have safely used several methods prescribed for bundling boys and girls in bed together before they were married,

<sup>2</sup> At the time this pamphlet was first issued it was impossible to obtain certain information relative to the subject of "bundling" among the "plain people," and particularly those included in our scope. Since the original edition, however, important phases on this subject have come to us, and they have been included in another pamphlet devoted entirely to that subject: "Little Known Facts About Bundling in the New World," (The Aurand Press). This admittedly interesting account (proved by the very large number sold), should readily silence the skeptic, for it recounts the "experiences and emotions" of one of the "plain people" who "bundled," but who now raises serious questions as to the methods practiced—morals, theology, etc., excerpted from one of their most important church papers.

because these young boys do not start out in their love affairs with worldly ideas of getting "special favors from girls" before they are married.

Hence, when we have it on good authority from the Amish direct that they bundle, and from Mennonites that they bundle, then we suppose it is fair to presume that they do so.

**Bundling in Mifflin County.**—Referring to the author's pamphlet "Bundling Prohibited," (The Aurand Press, 1929), we note briefly that "Bundling existed in Mifflin county, Pa., in 1928." The girl sleeps under the covers; the boy on top of the covers. In the same neighborhood, should illegitimate births occur, not necessarily the result of any bundling episodes, the mother is required to go before the church body, and there confess to the various incidents of her past—with whom, when and where. (This compares with legal processes in courts today when the issue is without "benefit of the law and clergy"). Such confessions are made freely, no persuasion being necessary; it is said that marriages readily take place just after such confessions. There seems to be less of the "sinfulness" thus attached to an honest confession, than would be the case among non-Amish.

These people are human; they know the emotions and passions of life and the method of reproduction, and are they to be censored for an occasional misstep in nature, when others constantly are enjoying the conjugal bed without the benefit of "license?"

The authorities governing the church naturally attend to all these cases, and numerous others falling within the scope of their "meeting." The civil law is within reach of all of them, but the wise ones avoid the law as long as they can.

A Mennonite college professor told the author some years ago that bundling is practiced among his people, not only in the States, but also in Canada, and that they bundle in the "good old-fashioned way"—the manner of which we shall leave to the imagination of the reader.

What is true of Canada, goes for Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and other states. Bundling in the old manner is more difficult to locate nowadays than formerly, because the "professional bundlers," or the travelling

salesmen are not visiting the sections where it may be found—hence the "news" is harder to "get out."

**Blue Gates.**—With reference to the "blue painted gates" in Lancaster county, there is a word to be said. Many persons speak of the "blue gate" as though they were speaking of a house of ill-fame, when they tell you that "where the blue gate is, there is a marriageable (virgin) daughter." Perhaps there is, but it just wouldn't necessarily follow that every blue gate told the same thing.

The Mennonites and some of the Amish just cannot help having their homes, their yards and front fences looking spic and span. What else would keep the latter in better condition than fresh paint? Blue is a favorite color and it has religious significance. So where there is a blue gate there may be a girl eligible for marriage.

Bundling is a convenient way to court—not necessarily the "last straw" to get rid of a daughter. It is an honorable custom, and has been practiced in all countries and in all ages.

The custom at one time was to place the girls in bags and to allow their "fellows," or beaux, to crawl into bed with them. Certainly it must have been a lot more comfortable to "court a girl in bed" than on an old sofa or an old, hard, wood-box!

**Marriages** usually take place on Tuesday or Thursday, at the home of the bride. It is customary, although not obligatory, to announce a contemplated marriage usually two weeks before-hand, probably to afford her more time for removing "hope chests" and such other items as a plain girl would have collected, to her new home, and to allow her the extra preparations for the wedding dinner.

A wedding means, besides the marriage ceremony, a day of feasting and good times lasting into the night. This practice seems to conform to practices among the Jews. A sermon also is delivered at the wedding, at which time certain knowledge and information is imparted to the newly-weds. Now this is not an "invention" of these people!

The marriage feast should be a big one, and on occasion there have been prepared for a repast, as many as 10 turkeys, 10 chickens, 50 lbs. of beef, 100 pies, 10 cakes, besides the "extras" without number.

Sometimes games of several sorts are played in the house, or outside, preferably in the barn where the accommodations were sufficient for such large numbers. Since it is usually the younger element that likes its fun, and particularly in the barn, it was extremely fortunate that a wedding ceremony in Mifflin county involved an older couple, instead of a young one. Smallpox unfortunately came to this wedding, and had it been that younger folks would have attended in goodly numbers, and had they gone afterwards to the barn to play their exciting games, one can see an epidemic among them of telling effect. A number of people in the vicinity and elsewhere in the State and nearby states were affected.

**An Amish Wedding** in Mifflin county just a few years ago must have been interesting to behold, and we tell it as nearly as we can, as told to us.

Two weeks prior to the wedding the bride and the groom are "published" (wedding announced). From that time until the wedding the groom drives from farm to farm in his buggy, inviting those whom he wishes to have attend.

The marriage ceremony was held in a neighbor's home of the bride. The parents of neither the bride or groom attended the ceremony, according to ritual. The bride and groom were taken by the main preacher (who unites them in marriage), to a room by themselves and asked them questions—(would these have to deal with sex as we note to be the case with Jews?)—then in about fifteen minutes he returned with them to the room (singing taking place during the instruction period). Then following them were two bridesmaids and two best men.

The services lasted about three-and-a-half hours, and three or four preachers spoke, then called on different others. After that the big meal!

The meal, or dinner, is always at the bride's home; everything you want to eat or look at. The bride's table, of course, always has the

nicest food, and more of a variety. They have what they call the corner table; after they are through with most of the eating (they sit and eat until 3, or 3.30 o'clock), the bride cuts her cake and sends pieces to her best friends at different tables.

For dinner they had roast turkey, chicken and duck.

They sing a lot from noon until 3.30. Then they go to the barn and play party games, similar to English games. After exercises of this kind they are ready for supper at 5 o'clock, when each of the "Dutch" boys leads a girl by the hand, to the supper. This meal is prepared with leftovers from dinner, but warmed; plus lemon pie and baked oysters (in season).

They sang during and after supper, which may last, as it did at this wedding, until 9 o'clock, then they went to the barn again! Here they played games and sang until the wee hours of the morning.

The older folks do the work; men and women both wait on tables. They have committees, and each has its appointed work to do. In this case the father of the bride tended to the roast chickens.

**Divorces Are Forbidden;** but if one of a couple dies, the survivor may remarry.



## FUNERALS AND SUPERSTITIONS ATTRACT OUTSIDE INTEREST

**Burials.**—If the plain people are as brief with the preparation of the bodies of deceased members, as are the Jews, then funerals, or at least the preparation of the body is not difficult, nor long delayed.

Jews are known to keep their hats on in their synagogue, and when they marry; even the writer remembers just a few years ago, of a fairly advanced community, among the Reformed and Lutheran persuasions, wherein it formerly was the custom for the men to keep their hat on in church during funeral services, so long as they were one of the relatives, or chief mourners—others removed their's.

If this was a custom in the average German-settled community, it is pretty safe to assume that it is still more or less universal with the plain people.

The Amish do not hang crepes at the doors of the deceased; no flowers surround the coffin although the corpse may, on occasion, be seen in a coffin sparingly lined, or with head resting on pillow. The more progressive may allow handles on the coffins.

Services for the deceased may last for two or three hours, and be attended by one to three preachers.

The coffin may be taken to the grave-yard in a rough two-horse wagon, braced and held up some-times by bags of grain.

In Amish grave-yards are found small markers, at each grave, possibly 12x3x3—all nearly alike, severely plain, containing usually only the name, date of birth, and date of death—no eulogies, and apologies!

**Pow-Wowing or Faith-Healing.**—There are those who profess to know, and who stoutly declare that there are no "Pow Wowers" among the Amish and the Mennonites. We do not know definitely that there are any of the so-called "hex doctors," or the "quack doctor" variety. Appearances are deceptive, and we can only readily suspect that necessity is the mother of invention among them, as with other people.

Their heritage is such that, coming from the Old World with all the ideas they possessed, and with frugality and economy as their watchword, they would supply the same mental and physical corrective measures that other peoples do throughout the world—they would "lay on hands, anoint with oil, and pray;" they would sympathize with the sick, and that, dear reader, is the trite spirit, if not the manner, for "pow-wow-ing." There are other methods for curing the sick, but the one mentioned will "take" as quickly as will the prayers by any priest or clergyman; and with these people as quickly as through the use of sugar-coated pills.

**Superstitions.** We naturally want to feel that there is superstition among these people—although they might deny it. Theoretically they are right, for they reason all things from the Old Testament—and if they find any authority there, or in the New, for what they do—can there be any "superstition?"

But on the other hand, we do lots of things which are founded likewise on the same sources, and to say that we are not superstitious would really make us look like "liars." The whole structure is based on what we mean by "superstition."



## TEMPERANCE AND FRUGALITY ARE TWO OUTSTANDING ATTRIBUTES

**Drunkenness.**—Christianity has taken such hold on these people that drunkenness is an unheard-of condition among them. None are idle; none profane the name of their Lord and Saviour; none will bear arms against his neighbor, nor any other; none are on relief. Drunkenness breeds all of these-to-be-deplored conditions and vices—even in the face of Christianity.

**Banned Articles.**—Among some things generally banned to use to some of the more orthodox may be noted the telephone and top-buggies; although once married, top buggies generally are permissible, as a covering for the wife perhaps it is more a sign of marriage than a protection for the wife.

Dash-boards are taboo, although manure-deflectors are in use by common consent; bicycles, furnaces (few homes have any other stove or heating method, than the kitchen-stove); window curtains are "out;" rugs are not to be found, unless perhaps one in the spare room or "parlor;" musical instruments, "note books," and "store suspenders" are too worldly.

Carpets and other comforts and conveniences, involving extravagance, are not allowed. Anything of a nature that savours of "vanity" or pride are discarded and avoided.

The taking and exchanging of photographs, engravings, statuary, etc., are not allowed by the Old Amish families, although the Meeting House Amish are inclined to overlook it.

**Buying for Cash** is the common rule among them, and unless they can see some real and quick return they will not buy anything. Certainly they are not the kind to waste. Their women never "own" their husband's property!

**Never Hurry.**—These people take their time with nearly all things—they rarely show impatience, except that they are impatient to be always at work—at doing something. They know that life may reproduce itself in nine months, and that time goes on. Their place and

mission on earth is a preparatory one, and they must be "about the Father's business," whatever it be, to be in a happy mood.

It is pretty generally admitted a fact that when these people, or the average Pennsylvania German does something, it need not be done over again.

**Home-Folk.**—Not many of the Amish get far from home. At least they arrange once in a while to get to the county seat, wherever that may be, if necessary; certainly not just for the trip.

While railroad trains, steam and electric, and the ever-present automobiles go daily by their door, many of them have the first time to ride on any of these worldly contraptions.

In a recent trip into the Amish country of the Blue Ball-Morgantown district, it was noted that all occupants of buggies had their legs covered up, over their knees, by wool blankets, on one of the hottest days of the year. Since they had no dash-boards we supposed the blankets to act as manure deflectors.

In this same section, at the one-room school house east of Churchtown, there were thirty-two pupils—of which number twenty-eight were "Stultzfoos" children. In this locality one must know exactly which "Henry" Stoltzfoos he wants to see, for there are about forty such "Henrys" in the neighborhood!

Here the author spent some time in checking statements made in this account. Speaking for nearly an hour in Pennsylvania German with one of the "pillars" in his district, we were pleased to note that few revisions were necessary in any part of our thesis.



## WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOME AND IN THE HARVEST FIELDS

**Faithful Wives and Workers.**—The plain women have their hands full looking after the general work in the house, preparing meals for hungry men and children; tending the garden and cattle; it is nothing strange to see them work in the fields alongside the men and render a good account of themselves at whatever they put a hand to do.

Naturally hands exposed to toil such as makes up their lives every day in the year, do not come out soft and lovely. They have lots of mending to do, and somehow these families get along through life with few of the things which the rest of the world calls "necessary modern conveniences and appliances."

The outdoors of the farmer and his family give them that close communion with the ground that we hear many mothers speak of when children in the city are unhealthy, or unruly, or want to get out to play—"if they could only get into the ground—it's healthy for them—it's what they need."

There is a large amount of housework to be done, aside from cooking and sewing, etc. a lot of cleaning, since the large kitchen is the place where the family gathers when work gives way to rest.

There are generally no such things as linen on their kitchen tables which is where the family always dines, but their tables are scrubbed daily until the wood finally becomes quite smooth. Heavy coarse dishes serve their purpose.

Some of the finest-looking and best-kept farms to be seen in many days' driving can be found in the section northeast, 'round-about New Holland. Try it.

**Furniture** is always of the plainest sort; occasional guests are entertained in the parlor—especially the minister. Bed rooms are furnished with such pieces of furniture considered as being absolutely necessary. The beds may be of the old-fashioned rope variety. Plainness is used severely in most everything they have or use. Even closet space is in the rough—clothing merely being covered with a cloth.

They light the homes with oil; they can find no excuse in the Bible for electricity, or for many other modern day conveniences in the house or barn.

In the old log-cabin days among our early settlers, when they had but one or two rooms in the house, it was the custom for one and all to bathe in the common washtub. Even today this can easily be the rule among the folk living along the back-woods sections of the country, not of the Amish persuasion, necessarily—and in many sections of this vast country. We cannot imagine the backwoodsman walking, driving, or hiking to towns, or cities, just for the pleasure of taking a bath—privately! We have heard of more than just one or two instances in which man, wife, children; uncles and aunts together observe the rule of cleanliness without the single thought that their nakedness might stimulate sex excitement in each other. A working knowledge of impoverished conditions among the poor in the coal regions, in the city slums, and in the mountain and southern "squatter" sections might reveal a great number of instances of "bathing in the raw" with all the family present.

**Few Vices.**—If one goes to the trouble to visit these plain people in Lancaster, or any county where they may be found, one is startled at the sweet innocence of their children, to whom vices rarely come, because these are avoided through a constant religious pressure. Their parents are not addicted, and they do not allow the children to associate with, if at all avoidable, other children whose parents are known to dissipate.

**The Library** of the plain people during the past few generations might have consisted of the Bible, a hymn-book, prayer-hook, catechism, a sermon-book, and perhaps a few other books on devotion. In later years a book of "pow wows" conforming to authority given by Jesus to the Elders of the Church, and evidencing some use and nurture among their forbears, was to become a household book, at least with others of German extraction. Known as a "ga-brauch buch," it had a wide circulation, and is still in demand by the descendants of orthodox families and many non-Amish who have heard of its virtue.



## THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AND "DUTCH" DIALECT FAMILIAR TO ALL

**Are They "Dumb Dutch?"**—These people are not ignorant—that is they are well able to read and write, either in German or English. But they are not generally educated to what we call "our modern ideas." They shun these and learn what they want to, and keep on searching after the information relative to the teachings of their kind. Generally the German of three hundred years ago is the language of their religious meetings and sermons. Their services may last several hours and usually are largely attended by every one belonging thereto resident in their community. Either English, or Pennsylvania-"Dutch," so-called by the English in lieu of "Deutsch" is the language of the home and for general purposes, if desired.

**Reasoning Powers.**—One advantage the average plain man has over others of his worldly neighbors is that he knows both English and German tongues. This gives him opportunity to reason in both and when his thoughts are put into words the grammatical construction leaves much to be desired at times. He is not at a disadvantage due to these "handicaps."

**Dialect Advantages.**—It has been the writer's personal experience to carry on a conversation at length in our plain, simple, Pennsylvania "Dutch," not only with members of the plain "sects," but with Germans from any and every section of this or any other State, settled by those who originally came from Germany or adjacent countries, and whose children and their children blazed trails to all points of the compass.

The writer has also used successfully enough, our simple "dialect" to speak to, and to be understood by, German-born students, scholars and professors; Jews born in Germany, Roumania, Latvia and elsewhere; Austrians, whether of the pre-war, or post-war period. There is still enough of the original German flavor in our dialect after more than two hundred years' use and abuse, to satisfy the daily needs of many plain people and others of German extraction.

## HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE AMISH AND THE MENNONITES

**Our Sects.**—The "plain people" of Pennsylvania are the satisfied religious manifestations of dissatisfied Catholic priests in topsy-turvy Europe of the Reformation period.

The Mennonites and their kind were "born" advantageously after the Reformation, when the Bible had been translated from the Hebrew into German, and not from the Latin Vulgate, which up until that time was the only evidence of religion, scarcely available—and then through an approach to self-expression which did not appeal to the masses.

Men like Martin Luther and Menno Simon, as well as other "pro-testants," differed greatly even with one another, as to how men and women ought to worship, after breaking away from the Catholic church of that day.

Menno Simon, himself an ordained priest, differed with his superiors on church policies, and renounced his church and obligations. Others, believing substantially as he did, joined him in establishing a "new order" of worship, and in setting forth a set of rules or "Book of Discipline" for the conduct of those who joined in the movement.

This movement was intended as one wherein those who had been oppressed heretofore, could worship according to the then "new light" with respect to God: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Many phases in their lives are the direct outcome of their interpretation of portions of the Bible—including their hats, bonnets, hooks and eyes, their whiskers, and the cut of their clothing.

In directing the reader's attention to the Mennonites, we want to state that they were a distinct group of followers of Menno Simon, from the middle of the 1500's. Simon (or Simons) was born in Friesland in 1492, or 1495 (authorities differing); (died 1559).

He was educated for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic church and must have been well liked, for when he renounced his church and

priesthood, he had no trouble in extending his ideas and finding others who expressed the same feeling.

His starting of a new sect was typical of many others today where interpretations are based on passages of the Bible; or, on acts of General Assemblies of States, where men hold different points of view.

Simon's followers, popularly called Mennonites, were largely persons of conviction to be found in Switzerland, Germany and along the Rhine down into Holland. Most of them were German-spoken; some were Holland Dutch.

The Amish, another branch of the Mennonites, are followers of one Jacob Ammann, or Amen, or perhaps Ammon (variously spelled), who about the close of the seventeenth century, urged a much stricter obedience to the rules and regulations originally adopted.

Some of the membership had become indifferent to the matter of washing of feet, avoidance of those ex-communicated, and perhaps a tendency to adopt an occasional new idea or convenience, which were termed too worldly.

Therefore, today we have the Amish, and the Mennonites, and we have them in America to the number of more than a hundred and twenty different meetings, or conferences, in as many different communities.

The Amish take the cake, however, for picturesqueness among the plain people, and Lancaster county is one of the ideal spots in which to find them "at home." But we would not have you overlook those in the "Big Valley" of Mifflin county, where there are five distinct branches, at least, out of a membership of but several hundred.

In speaking of the Amish and Mennonites, one must take into the picture others who show by their wearing apparel and performance as to church and home "ritual," that they are "plain," too. Of these we may speak of the "German Baptist Brethren," or "Dunkers." There are thousands in the latter sect, a potential force for good in America.

This then, is a more or less brief summary of the origin of their faith. A few came to America before Penn, but the first numbers of them were families who settled in what is now Germantown, Philadelphia, in

1683, coming here from Crefeld, Germany. The first known Mennonite meeting-house in America was built in Germantown in 1708.

People of this persuasion were largely instrumental in setting Pennsylvania out on her right foot on her march through time. Religious and educational, as well as agricultural and industrial leaders among them were among the out-standing men of early Colonial times.

Lancaster county, and others in this State, are rich in history, lore and commerce, because these people farmed their lands in those parts—living close to the soil—and to God. Lancaster is noted as the richest agricultural county in the United States, and the plain people deserve most of the credit for this honor.

They are really a successful transplanting of a race, a creed and a color, from their native soil into a new soil—and they have changed their ways but little from the time Menno Simon and Jacob Ammon gave them the torch to carry on.

If one wanted to travel to any extent throughout Europe, undoubtedly one would plan to see Switzerland. Why travel to Europe when you can see the Swiss in their odd trappings and glory, right here in Pennsylvania, lacking only the snow-capped Alps? Here are the best farms, and the finest cheese "mills" to be found in America.

The account of "Bell don't make—bump!" is one that has been told time and again, and "Tillie, the Mennonite Maid" has been the source of most of the misinformation obtained by outsiders about the Mennonite people. Stories of all shades and proportions have been told by persons who have never seen any of them, and given as "gospel truth."

From birth to death their lives are ordered by "ritual" to methods which others think unnecessary, or even foolish. But these people do it and like it—and prefer it to anything the rest of the Protestant world has to offer—avoiding everything outside their own circle as they would a plague.

If the Commonwealth gives these people a free rein in their religious expressions, there will be Mennonites for-ever-and-a-day, for they will

hold their own in a world where around then there is much strife and discord; while amongst them there is peace, pleasure and plenty.

The Mennonites are by far the larger in number of the plain sects; then follow the Amish and the Brethren, or bunkers—not, however in church membership. Some pronounce it "Awmish;" others "A-mish;" some even indicate it should be "Ommish." They followed the lead of Jacob Am-man, or Amen, or Ammon—so you take your choice.



## AMISH-MENNONITE STATISTICS

**The Earliest Amish Congregation** in the United States was established along North Kill Creek, Berks county, Pa., in 1735. The Indians subsequently crowded them southward, where today they are firmly rooted.

Their church membership is as follows, according to the "Familien-kalendar fuer das Jahr unseres Herrn 1937," edited by Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Church (membership in U.S.A., 47,253); Amish Mennonites (Conservatives), 1608; Amish Mennonites (Old Order), 8,600; Church of God in Christ Mennonites, 2,700; Defenceless Mennonites, 1,500; Central Conference of Mennonites, 3,273; Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 12,500; Krimmer M. Bruedergemeinde, 1,850.



## THE TRUE "FAITH AND PRACTICE" OF THE BRETHREN, OR "DUNKERS"

**"Plain People."**—A very large sect known as the German Baptist Brethren or "Dunkers" goes a long way toward making up the plain people population of Pennsylvania. Other states have respectable numbers of them, and find them among the best of their citizenry.

Their church ritual is practicable. It requires discipline among its members, among other things. The membership finds it no hardship to practice what they preach and it is a splendid example of a peaceable and industrious God-fearing Christian people that we have among us.

Their origin is based on substantially the general ideals for living so common among the plain people, or "sects," as they are sometimes called. However, they have off-shoots like the several others, and we find them sometimes believing that they are more than right, no matter how trivial the matter may be. But are we not all that way about little things?

While their lives are well-ordered they have not gone to the extremes noticeable among some of the other sects. Even the general run of Mennonites conform generally to habits not at all unusual. It is the extremists that our foregoing account covers.

The following brief references have been taken from a pamphlet on "The Brethren," descriptive of their "Faith and Practice," edited by one of their prominent members, Elder D. L. Miller:

**Introduction.**—The Brethren are a large body of Christians, whose faith and practice are not generally known outside of their immediate localities. The errors in, the books that attempt to describe the Brethren have been both numerous and lamentable . .

**Faith and Practice.**—The Brethren hold the Bible to be the inspired and infallible Word of God, and accept the New Testament as their rule of faith and practice . in the Trinity, divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost, and in future rewards and punishments . .

**Baptism** . . . is administered by trine immersion . . . the applicant is taken down into the water, and, kneeling, reaffirms his faith in Christ . . . follow closely the practice of the apostolic church, and admit none into fellowship until they have been baptized . . . Infants can neither believe nor repent, hence they are not proper subjects for baptism . . . Changes were gradually made from trine immersion to sprinkling, but the church that made the change, the Roman Catholic, still retains the three actions in applying water to the candidate . . . nearly all Protestant churches that practice sprinkling retain the same form . . .

**Love Feast and Communion** . . . of bread and wine . . . A full meal is prepared and placed upon tables, used for that purpose, in the church, and all the members partake of the supper .

**Feet-Washing** . . . Before eating supper, the religious rite of washing feet is observed . . . following very closely the examples of the Master . . . water is poured into a basin, a brother girds himself with a towel and washes and wipes his brother's bared feet, and in turn has his feet washed . . . the sisters wash their sisters' feet and all the proprieties of the sexes are most rigidly observed . . .

**The Supper** . . . (following the feet-washing) is eaten with solemnity . . . at the conclusion of the meal thanks are returned . . . the right hand of fellowship and the kiss of charity are given . . . The salutation of the kiss of love in worship and in customary greetings, as enjoined by the apostles, is never observed between the sexes .

**Communion** . . . is then administered . . . Love-feasts are held in each congregation usually once or twice each year.

**Plainness** . . . The Brethren claim to be, and are in many respects, a peculiar people . Plain dressing is taught and required and a general uniformity is observed, but this is regarded as a means to an end . . .

**Non-Litigant** . . . not allowed to go to law with one of their own number, nor with others, without first asking the counsel of the church . . .

**Non-Resistant and Non-Swearing** . . . take no active part in politics, and "swear not at all." If called upon to testify in the courts, they simply affirm . . . Yea, yea; Nay, nay.

**Secretism** . . . No brother may become a member of any secret or oath-bound society . .

**The Anointing** . . . (James v, 14, 15), annoint the sick with oil . . . only by request of the sick . . . officiating elder applies the oil to the head three times, two elders then lay their hands on the head of the sick, and offer a prayer for the anointed one.

**Marriage** . . . bonds can be dissolved only by death . . .

There is another sect known as the "River Brethren," in the section south of Harrisburg. One of their schools is the Messiah Bible School, at Grantham.



## THE CANDID CAMERA GOES INTO ACTION IN LANCASTER COUNTY



**In Haste.**—Amish woman on a cold day going to a public "vendue," one of their delights and a way to save money.



**Willing Little Helpers.**—Twins help mother carry a purchase of plates and some odds houle from a public sale.



**Nonchalance.—Three trusting youngsters waiting—until the camera snaps—  
and they are off in a great big flash.**



**Contemplation.—An Amish woman has purchased an ironing-board at a sale,  
and now says to herself: "Is it o. k?"**



**Contrast.—An Amishman and helpmate on a wagon with modern springs, passing a school building in Belleville. Education in the higher grades is opposed by them as unnecessary and tending toward worldliness. ()**



**Bonnets and Shawls.—The Amish, too, have time for conversation. Note the bonnets, and initials low on shawl, left**



**Satisfaction.—Here we see the contented expression of a successful bidder at a public sale. Possibly the woman in the foreground did the bidding for the one to the left, while the one in the center says: "Oh!"**



**All Together . . . Broad-brimmed hats, full-grown whiskers, heavy sweaters, a great-coat or two, and a bonnet. We don't know what she might be saying, but her audience is giving her all possible attention**



**"Rule of Thumb."—Patriarchal Amishman in animated conversation indicates his "point" by an old standard**



**Transportation—Nearly every "Old Order" Amishman has a buggy as the highest type of transportation with which to get to town. Patterned so alike, it remains for the Amish to say: "We know 'em!"**



**Father and Son.—Amishman with store suspenders and "broadfall" pants (no fly) . . . and a bewildered-looking boy**



**Curiosity.—The child on the left just "wants to see" . . . while the one in the center "listens in" on the conversation.**



**Religion . . . is the topic of this pair, as when most Amish gather. Child, in center, and man at right, eat ice cream**



**Planning.—"I got the stuff at my own price, now I wonder how I'll ever get it 'to home' without a neighbor's help."**