

## LOVE FEAST OF THE DUNKARDS.

### PECULIAR CEREMONIES OF A PECULIAR SECT OF CHRISTIANS.

LANCASTER, Penn., April 25.—The Dunkard Brethren, or German Baptists, held the first of their annual series of love feasts near West Hanover yesterday and to-day, preceded by their regular Conference on Thursday. There are at least 40,000 members of this peculiar sect in Dauphin, Lebanon, Lancaster, and Berks Counties. Fully 3,000 attended to-day's feast.

The season for holding these feasts usually extends from seed time to harvest. One love feast differs but little from another, but all are highly interesting to a stranger. The service consists of preaching, exhortations, old-fashioned psalm singing, feasting, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, with communion, (distinctly separate from the Lord's Supper,) concluding with the ceremony of mutual feet washing and the salutation of the holy kiss.

The brethren and sisters, who were all dressed in the uniformly plain attire of sober gray, black, or brown prescribed by the rules, came to the feast in all manner of country vehicles, and the district roads for miles around were made dusty with their driving. The use of buttons on clothing is not permitted, and hooks and eyes are used exclusively instead. The sisters wore their hair brushed smoothly across their foreheads and knotted behind, underneath severely plain bonnets of brown or gray. They wore loose, straight skirts of the same sombre tints, unrelieved by ruffles or trimmings of any kind. Gold ornaments or feathers are to the sisters as sinful and worldly as Paris bonnets or Worth-made gowns would be. The brethren wore their hair long and uncut, parted in the middle, with long beards and full mustaches. They are mostly farmers, noted everywhere for their honesty and thrift.

During the progress of the Conference and love feast the brethren and sisters sat apart on different sides of the main aisle of the church, took their meals separately in the basement of the church edifice, where it is the custom of the denomination to provide accommodations for cooking, and at night slept in the attic above, which is furnished with cots and beds, and in the neighboring farm houses and barns. In celebrating the Lord's Supper, according to their custom they ate soup, bread, and meats, pies and coffee. The ceremony known as the salutation of the holy kiss concluded this supper. Each brother imprinted a smacking kiss from his bearded lips on the bearded lips of his neighbor at table, and each sister similarly kissed her sister companion sitting nearest to her. The communion service which followed consisted in the breaking of unleavened bread and the drinking of unfermented wine, according to formulas modeled strictly after a literal interpretation of the Gospels.

Feet washing, which is considered the most solemn and significant rite in the whole service, completed the programme. All the brethren, after doffing their coats and vests, and girding themselves with white aprons, took turns in washing the feet of five or six of his nearest neighbors in a bowl and wiping them with a towel, giving each of them a kiss as the feet were bathed and another kiss as they were wiped. The sisters on the other side of the aisle did likewise among themselves, while appropriate hymns were chanted by the remainder of the congregation. A benediction, pronounced by a reverend Bishop, finished the love feast, and the participants immediately scattered.