

in the present war betray gross ignorance and exhibit a curious bitterness toward Germany.

There is a common belief that truth will always prevail *in the end*, that lies have short legs; but *the end* is sometimes far away, and misrepresentation is as efficient as picric-acid bombs. They are not good weapons and may be efficient for a while only, but they are very powerful and their greatest drawback consists in the fact that they are mostly used by those whose cause is both indefensible and hopeless. Are we justified in drawing a conclusion from the obvious fact that pro-British literature (with very few, but no glaring, exceptions) is extremely one-sided, lacking in logic, based upon error and involving lamentable ignorance? Read the wild denunciations of the German cause, and Horace will speak out of the recollection of your school days:

"Difficile est satiram non scribere."

('Tis hard not to become satirical.)

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE FIRST TREASURER OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY EMIL BAENSCH.

Whenever good fortune brings within your view a ten-dollar bill, one of those yellow-backed ones called a Gold Certificate, take a good look at it. You will find on it the likeness of a gentleman of the old school, with these words underneath: "Michael Hillegas, First Treasurer of the U. S."

He was born in Philadelphia whither his father had emigrated in 1724 from near Heidelberg, in Germany. Pennsylvania was the Mecca of German emigration in the eighteenth century, as many as 12,000 arriving in one year. The elder Hillegas became one of the merchant princes in the city, and his prominence, as well as his inclination, rendered him a friendly adviser and helpful guide to the newcomers.

His death in 1749 transferred the management of his business to his son, then barely twenty-one years of age. An administrator's bond of forty thousand pounds and an inventory of personal property covering fifteen pages of the probate records, attest the value and extent of the estate. This was considerably increased under the skilful and energetic direction of the son. He acquired substantial interests in sugar refineries, iron forges, land companies, fishing companies, etc. He was one of the organizers of the well-known Lehigh Coal Company and was a charter member of the Bank of North America, still one of our strong financial institutions.

Like the father, the son became one of the leaders in the colony. In those days it was the custom to raise funds frequently for public purposes, even for the building of churches, by means of a lottery, and public confidence instinctively pointed to Hillegas as the proper manager. For ten years, from 1765

to 1775, he was a member of the provincial assembly, and an active and aggressive one. He was chairman of the important committees of public accounts and of taxation and was consulted in every move relating to the public finances.

When war was seen to be approaching he promptly enrolled in the militia, was placed on the Committee of Safety, and on the Commission to erect Fort Mifflin for the defense of the city. Saltpeter was a necessary material for warfare, and he was made chairman of the committee to procure a supply, and was also delegated to provide arms for the soldiers.

The finances of the young nation were at first in charge of a Board of Treasury, displaced in 1781 by a Superintendent of Finance, three years later by a Board of Commissioners, and in 1789 by the Treasury Department as at present constituted. Under each of these systems were the offices of Treasurer, Auditor and Controller, who were elected by Congress during the earlier years.

In July, 1775, Michael Hillegas was elected Treasurer and annually re-elected until the present constitution was adopted,—a period of fourteen years. His powers were gradually enlarged; he was authorized to borrow money and to issue and sign bills of credit; when the office of Treasurer of Loans was discontinued its duties were devolved upon him; when the Mint was established he was directed "to receive and take charge of all coin made by the Master Coiner."

His wealth enabled him to furnish the large bond required and to aid the public credit. His ability and business experience were a guarantee that the duties would be well performed. Proof of the faultless fulfilment of this guarantee is found in the fact that such men as Samuel Adams and Roger Sherman were among his warm supporters, and in the fact of his frequent re-elections, often by unanimous vote.

Thus from the very beginning, through the struggles of the Revolution, through the floundering of the Confederation, and until the nation was safely anchored under the Constitution, the official treasure of our people was intrusted to the care and guidance of this faithful and patriotic German-American. The first books he kept, a blotter, a journal, and a ledger, are now reverently preserved in the archives of the Treasury Department.

A few years after his retirement he was again drafted, serving as alderman of Philadelphia until his death in 1804. As such he was active in furthering the improvement and beautifying of what was then the capital of the nation. His leisure was devoted to educational and philanthropic matters, and the Pennsylvania Hospital is a landmark of his efforts. He left, surviving him, one son and four daughters, and his descendants are to be found among prominent families in the East, though the male line is extinguished and no one now living bears his name.

Hillegas was jovial and genial in temperament. He was expert with the flute and the violin, author of an "Easy Method for the Flute." John Adams writes of him: "He is a great musician, talks perpetually of the forte and piano, of Handel, and songs and tunes." Optimism and thrift breathe through the lines which he sent to his daughter, Henriette, on her marriage to Joseph Anthony of New York:

"No trivial loss nor trivial gain despise,
Mole-hills, if often heaped, to mountains rise;
Weigh every small expense, and nothing waste,
Farthings long saved amount to pounds at last."