

PROMINENT AND PROGRESSIVE
PENNSYLVANIANS
OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY.

A REVIEW OF THEIR CAREERS.

"Nil Mortalibus arduum est."

—HORACE.

VOLUME I.

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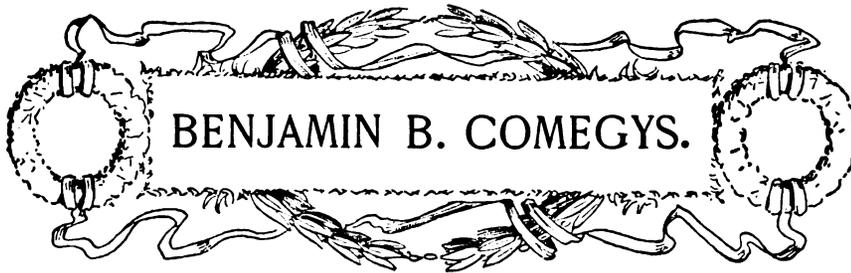
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HERE is no more important branch of public prosperity than that which is found in the financial institutions of the country. It is in such centres that the great public movements are brought into action. Panics make their first appearance there, and a redundancy of national wealth is at once reflected there as well. It has proved necessary to the continued prosperity of a community that its financial institutions be maintained at as high a standard as possible. Pennsylvania has been particularly fortunate in this respect and out of the entire State, Philadelphia especially so. The Philadelphia National Bank is one of the greatest organizations of its kind in the country, and this is chiefly owing to the fact that its affairs have been administered throughout its entire history by men eminently fitted for such service. President Benjamin B. Comegys has conducted the management of the bank since 1880 as its President. He entered the bank as a junior clerk in 1848, when but a young man, but step by step he rose until he reached the highest round of the ladder.

BENJAMIN B. COMEGYS was born in Dover, Delaware, May 9, 1819, and his parents were among the best known people of that State. He received his early education in the public schools near the place of his birth, and he remained in his boyhood home, pursuing this educational course, until 1837. In January of that year his father was inaugurated Governor of the State of Delaware and Benjamin Comegys came to Philadelphia, where he entered upon a business life wherein he was afterwards to attain such great success. At that time he was not quite eighteen years of age, but he was fired with the ambition of youth and a deter-



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mination to succeed which had been greatly fostered by the example set him by his father, who was one of the most representative men of the times. For eleven years Mr. Comegys served in Market Street counting houses, the greater part of the time being with the dry-goods firm of Thomas C. Rockhill & Company. This training in mercantile pursuits fitted him for an active career in the financial department of the business world, and, in May, 1848, he entered what is now the Philadelphia National Bank, as a junior clerk, and passed through the various stages one step after another until he attained to the highest position which that great and successful organization could give him, namely, the Presidency. In August, 1851, he was elected Cashier; in 1866 he was made Vice-President, a post he occupied for a period of fourteen years, during which time he so successfully participated in the administration of the institution's affairs that it advanced with rapid strides to the front rank of similar corporations in the State of Pennsylvania. In 1880 he was elected President of the bank, and he has held that office ever since. While Mr. Comegys was progressing in that direction as an official, he also became identified with other institutions of a like nature, and while still a comparatively young man, he became one of the best known in Philadelphia through his official connections. In 1869 he was elected a Director of the Philadelphia Trust, Safe Deposit and Insurance Company, of which organization he was made Vice-President in 1890. Since 1858 he has been a member of the Clearing House Committee of Banks, and now he is the only surviving original member of that Committee.

Mr. Comegys, in 1873, was appointed a Manager of the Western Saving Fund Society by the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas, and, in 1881, he was made a Director of the Board of City Trusts having charge of Girard College. In May, 1873, the Mayor of Philadelphia appointed him a Manager of the House of Refuge. In 1884, upon special invitation, he addressed the National Bankers' Association at Saratoga, and, in 1894, at Baltimore, he received a similar honor. The first of his subjects was "Safe Banking," and the second, "What Manner of Man should a Banker

be?" Mr. Comegys was elected a Director of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, November 9, 1887, and made a member of the Finance Committee. In this capacity he has indicated the possession of those peculiar qualities and talents which denote the financier, and the Pennsylvania Railroad Company contains in its organization few men of wider financial experience than Benjamin B. Comegys. On May 9, 1894, the degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by the Jefferson College.

In a certain field of letters Mr. Comegys is perhaps almost as well known as he is in the financial world. While he has a particular talent for literary work, most of his productions have been of a semi-religious character. He is an active member of the Presbyterian Church and one who makes the world the field of his labors of love in training the young to ways of honor and usefulness. Mr. Comegys is one of the Advisory Board of the Pennsylvania Railroad Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia. Some of Mr. Comegys' books are: "Talks with Boys and Girls, or Wisdom Better than Gold;" "Beginning Life;" "How to Get On;" "Old Stories with New Lessons;" "Girard College Addresses;" "Turn Over a New Leaf;" "A Tour Round My Library;" "A Primer of Ethics" (translated in Italian, Arabic and Japanese languages); "A Manual for the Chapel of Girard College;" "A Manual for the Chapel of the House of Refuge;" "An Order of Worship, with Forms of Prayer for Divine Service;" "Public Worship;" "Household Worship;" "Prayers for the Chapel and Family;" "Scriptural Prayer Book for Church Services;" and a number of others by which he is quite well known as a writer upon religious subjects. He possesses one of the finest private libraries to be found in Philadelphia.

On April 20, 1847, Mr. Comegys was married to Miss Sarah P. Boyd, whose parents were of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and who died in June, 1896. They have had three daughters and one son, who died in November, 1884. Mr. Comegys' chief interests at present are found in the management of the Philadelphia National Bank and in his other financial connections.