

THE
FATHERS

OF

The German Reformed Church

IN

EUROPE AND AMERICA.

BY

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"BIRDS OF THE BIBLE," "UNION WITH THE CHURCH," "THE LIFE OF
SCHLATTER," AND "GOLDEN CENSER."

Like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang
a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.—SONG OF SOLOMON, iv. 4.

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1872.

REV. JOHN HILLEGAS.¹

1800 — 1828.

MR. HILLEGAS belongs to the earlier race of Western ministers—not indeed to the pioneers strictly so called, but to the second class, at least, whose arduous labors and frequent exposures fully entitle them to a place among the “Fathers.”

John Hillegas was born in Montgomery County, Pa., November 12th, 1800.² He emigrated to Montgomery County, Ohio, with his parents, in 1816. Being at an early age religiously impressed, he was received into the Church in 1818, by the Rev. J. William Dechant, in St. John’s church, in Miami Township. His heart was effectually drawn to the gospel ministry; and, after pursuing his theological and other studies for some time, under the direction of the Rev. H. Heincke, a Lutheran minister in the neighborhood, and, afterwards, with the Rev. George Weiss, of Lancaster, Ohio, he was licensed and ordained, and settled as pastor over three congregations in and around Carrollton, Carroll County,—then called Centreville, Columbiana County. His ordination took place on Tuesday

¹ Prepared by the Editor.

² Rev. J. H. Reiter.—West. Miss., April 9th, 1857. Also, Ger. Ref. Mess., April 22d, 1857.

evening, May 23d, 1826, in connection with that of his friend and fellow-student, the Rev. David Long, who also labored but a short time, when he was suddenly cut down by the cholera, in 1833, in the full vigor of manhood.

One year after his ordination and settlement in the ministry, Mr. Hillegas reported six congregations; from which we gather that, by his active and devoted labors, he organized, in the course of a single year, three new congregations. But his ministerial career was an exceedingly brief one; for, on the 28th day of June, 1828, only two years after having been solemnly set apart and ordained to the office and work of the ministry, he was called away by death, after a severe and protracted spell of illness, aged 27 years, 7 months, and 16 days.

“Mr. Hillegas was a man of good natural endowments; and it was his constant aim and endeavor to improve the talents bestowed upon him, and to employ them to the welfare of men and the glory of God. He thus grew in knowledge and grace, and honorably magnified his office. He was conscientious and faithful in the discharge of all his public and private duties; and his piety and moral deportment were of an undoubted and unexceptionable character. As a Christian, he was humble and devoted; as a preacher, he united the elements of earnestness and love; and as a pastor, he was kind, affable, and exemplary. Respected and esteemed by the community generally, he was especially beloved by the people of his own charge, among whom he labored with much acceptance.

But his earnest and efficient labors on earth are ended. His mission of winning souls to Christ is brought to a close. His record and reward are on high. Peace to his ashes, and a happy immortality to his spirit."

The Hillegas family, from which the subject of this sketch is a descendant, is one of the largest and most respectable family connections in Eastern Pennsylvania. They make up a large portion of several of our flourishing congregations in Montgomery and adjoining counties, and are, as a whole, warmly attached to the German Reformed Church, of which they are generally members. Our own ancestors belonged to this noble stock, and we deem it a pleasure to record this instance of Christian fidelity and pious devotion among the early ministers of the great West—the heroic heralds of the cross!