

Financiers of Freedom



Lower Wall Street in 1797

Proposed Statue of Salomon in New York.

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

THE names of Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Casimir Pulaski, the two Polish soldiers who fought in the Revolution, are familiar to most citizens of the United States, but it is doubtful if the name of another Pole, Haym Salomon, means anything to more than one out of a thousand Americans.

Yet his contribution to the cause of American liberty may in some respects be considered infinitely greater than those of the other two combined.

The invaluable services of this Polish Jew, whose financial genius was so vital to the Revolution's success, have always been known to the scholars of that struggle, but the difficulties of obtaining reliable information have kept this inspiring story from the public and the efforts which have been made to pay appropriate tribute to his memory have, for some unknown reason—unless it can be attributed to the proverbial ingratitude of republics which so easily forget their debts to some who labored mightily in their cause—been defeated for more than a century.

Fortunately for the cause of Truth there has appeared recently a biography of this man which enables us to see him in his true stature as one of the really great figures of the Revolution. It is the book "Haym Salomon and the Revolution," written by Charles Edward Russell and published by the Cosmopolitan Book Corporation.

Salomon was born at Lissa in Poland in 1740. At the age of thirty he joined in the fight to resist Russian domination of Poland, was associated with Kosciuszko and Pulaski in their heroic but futile effort and like those two, was forced to flee from the country. He first made his way to England but soon left there and came to America, arriving in New York in 1772. Salomon had had considerable training in business before leaving Poland and he quickly established himself as a broker and commission merchant in New York city. The opportunity lay at hand for him to make a great fortune but he hindered his chances for that by one act. For the freedom-loving Pole almost immediately allied himself in the strongly Royalist colony of New York with a "disreputable and discredited" organization, called the Sons of Liberty, who as early as 1734 had banded together to resist oppressive acts by the British crown.

He was a worker in their cause at the outbreak of the Revolution, and late in 1776 he was one of a number of the Sons who were imprisoned by the British, accused of having started the fire which swept New York soon after the defeat of Washington's army on Long Island led to the occupation of that city by Lord Howe. Salomon was lodged in the Provost and to be held there meant certain death for many a patriot during the reign of Cunningham, the brutal master of the British prisons in New York.

Among the British troops were thousands of Hessian mercenaries who could not speak a word of English. When it became known that Salomon could speak German (he was also a master of French, Polish, Russian and Italian), he was put in better quarters and used as an interpreter to the Hessians by the British. Eventually he was released on parole. Even while a prisoner he was working in the patriots' cause for, unknown to the British, in his talks with the Hessians he was urging them to desert and pointing out to them the boundless opportunities which lay in the new country for them when the war was over. More than that he was taking advantage of the fact that was regarded as a "trust" by the British, passing by their sentries freely and going pretty much where he pleased, to aid in the escape of American prisoners. After his parole, he was able again to engage in business, using this as well as his interpreter duties for the British, as a cloak for his activity in behalf of the patriots.

For two years Salomon led a seemingly peaceful existence, although there was never a moment when his life was not in danger of being ended

before a firing squad or at the end of a rope if the British had suspected what he was about. Then suddenly in August, 1778, Sir Henry Clinton received word that Washington was plotting to burn the city, and Salomon was arrested as the chief agent in the plot and returned again to the Provost. Details of this imprisonment are lacking, but it is believed that he was condemned to death but managed to escape from the prison shortly before the day of his execution. How he did it is unknown, but it is believed that he bought his way out of the prison and then used his familiarity with British posts and British guard methods to escape from the city.

At any rate he next appeared in Philadelphia and there the most important part of his career began. Although he was penniless, he still had his native energy and his knowledge of commerce and finance. So he immediately opened an office and began to deal in bills of exchange and other securities. By this time France had come into the war on the side of the Americans and French money was coming into the country. Philadelphia was not only the capital of the newly-created United States but it became a prosperous business and shipping center. In its prosperity Salomon shared.

But this prosperity was not shared by the infant government, for the financial policy of the Continental Congress had been a blundering one from the start. By 1779 it was having serious financial difficulties. By 1780 the situation was even more critical. By 1781, with a treasury deficit of \$1,000,000, it was desperate. It was desperate because the Revolution seemed near to collapse. On the first day of the new year the entire Pennsylvania line mutinied and started from Morris-town for Philadelphia to force Congress to relieve their distress. They had not been paid for months, they were in rags and they were half starved. Two weeks later the New Jersey line also revolted.

Congress managed to head off the revolt and soon afterwards took steps to salvage what seemed to be a lost cause. Robert Morris, whose financial genius Washington had discovered early and upon whom that leader had leaned heavily in more than one crisis, was called to lead Congress out of the financial morass. It was a formidable task which faced Morris in his newly-created post of superintendent of finance and a part of our admiration for the men who faced the bullets and bayonets of the British on the battlefield in the struggle for liberty should be reserved for this man who fought his fight far from the firing line and fought it with what must have seemed overwhelming odds against him.

He was "beset with a thousand difficulties and perils," writes Russell. "He used up all his own credit; always he was at the end of his resources, often he was at the end of his wits. Help from abroad came in fragments and slowly. When it arrived it was in the form of bills on Paris, chiefly on the great French banking house of La Coudreux and company. These reached Morris (sometimes) from various sources, and he must needs turn them into current money before they could be of use to him. In other words he must sell these bills for what he could get for them, gather up depreciated state currency and try to keep going. . . . His position was virtually at the mercy of brokers and yet set against them. The government and the government's officers could never go huckstering the government's bills up and down the Coffee House. Brokers were indispensable, but they were reputed, probably not without reason, to be cormorants; all except one."

That one was Haym Salomon. Morris' unpublished Diary, upon which Salomon's biographer draws heavily for his information, is filled with references to his dealings with Salomon, and all of them reflect the highest credit upon him as a patriot and a man. "One thing is made by the Diary as plain as daylight," writes Russell. "Haym Salomon is the pivot of the whole business. He stands in the breach; he keeps back the masses of attacks that make for bankruptcy; everything depends upon him. It is Haym Salomon this and Haym Salomon that. On some days he makes six or seven visits to consult with the su-

perintendent. Forty times, according to the testimony of the cashier (of the Bank of North America, which Morris established), between August 1, 1782, and the time Morris goes out of office, Haym Salomon comes to bat with his timely check. No matter where he gets the money; he gets it and it is this money that saves the day.

"He sells bills when no one else can sell them. More than that; he sells without gouging, without profit, even. Other brokers continue to harass the superintendent by underselling the market and hampering the sale of his bills. He has no trouble from Salomon. . . . One other great service he performs, though to this day no one has noticed it, nor given the slightest credit for it. With a magnificent disregard of his own interests, he endorses the paper of the broken-backed government. No one else will do this. The government's credit has ebbed and ebbed until it has sunk from sight. Everybody knows it is gone; sagacious men believe it will never return. Salomon endorses its paper and its officers' paper, and its Allies' paper, and makes himself personally liable for all. We have the evidence; no need for speculation or surmise."

All of this, was, of course, after Cornwallis' surrender. Contrary to popular belief the affair at Yorktown did not end the Revolution. Great as was that victory, the patriot cause was still in danger and none realized that more than Washington who immediately after receiving the surrender began making plans for the next season's campaign. He could not realize that his victory had dealt the British ministry a blow from which it could not recover and that it was paying the way to peace. That was still two years away, and before it could be realized there was still much yet to be done. And, of course, the doing of that had to be financed. So the burden of making good the victory of Yorktown fell upon Robert Morris and his friend and helper, Haym Salomon.

It is impossible to estimate the full text of Salomon's contribution to the cause of liberty in terms of such intangibles as moral support and fostering the will-to-win. But there is a definite record of his tangible contribution, great in itself but smaller in importance than the intangible. For the records show that Salomon advanced in specie to Morris at various times and in various sums a total of \$211,678, and although it can not be proved definitely that all of this was his own money, it is probable that most of it was. But the main fact is that he placed that money in Morris' hands when it was most needed and when few others had sufficient faith in the cause to risk even a fraction of that sum.

And his reward? He died January 6, 1785, when he was only forty-five years old. There is no doubt that the hardships he suffered in the British prisons and in his labors for the Continental government shortened his life. He was supposed to be rich, but after his death it was found that he was virtually a bankrupt. He left a widow and four children facing poverty. He had given his all to the cause of liberty. "He died without formulating any claims for reimbursement for the sums he had advanced," writes Russell. "In the opinion of later investigators he had entire confidence that when the government should be established, it would pay its obligations to him."

As for his "entire confidence" that the government would pay its obligations to him, they were never realized. For more than 80 years his heirs tried to get some recompense from Congress but they never succeeded. "A republic soon forgets!"

Community Building

Paved Driveway Adds Much to Home Comfort

Driveway paving is one type of improvement which may be undertaken at low cost with resultant gains both in convenience and property value. A well-placed and designed driveway adds materially to the enhancement of residential property. Consider, for instance, the fact that a number of home owners today are following the practice of tinting the driveway slab to harmonize with the color borne in the stucco of the dwelling! Not a bad idea, and one that might be well worth while investigating.

Decoration, however, is only a secondary function of the paved driveway. The concrete slab is primary assurance that the family car will not be stranded in mud or sifted full of dust, assurance that the lawn will not be rutted, assurance that visiting coal trucks and delivery wagons will be amply supported without fear of a breakdown.

But there are other things of interest which may be developed in connection with a concrete driveway. In this modern day there is nothing quite so intriguing as turning a purely utilitarian gadget into a means for amusement. Enough! The hunch is sufficient. Provided with a paint can and a measuring tape we mark off a few lines and numbers on the slab and— presto—we have a shuffleboard court. A troweled finish, plus polishing, will provide a better playing surface.—Exchange.

Community Fund Serves Good Purpose in Cities

Out of the public's willingness to sacrifice and serve during the war period, when the community chest idea became popular the country over, came the feeling that such a plan should not be lost in times of peace. Thus the community fund came into existence in scores of American cities. It had so much in its favor that it has needed little argument in its support but annually the people must be reminded of its existence.

In the larger cities the community fund idea replaces haphazard charitable giving and avoids duplication. It used to be that solicitors were in the field most of the time and people did not know a worthy cause from an unworthy one. The community fund has established a clearing house for all relief organizations. Their needs and budgets are studied by experts and their estimates carefully considered. When these are added together the goal of the fund for the year is known.

"Show It With Flowers"

Intelligent and observant men who are much thrown with strangers in their daily lives often discover valuable signs by which to quickly and accurately judge their fellow men.

A veteran commercial traveler who used to "cover" vast expanses of country by the old-fashioned means of a horse and surrey remarked to a group of friends: "I got so that in looking for a place to spend the night I would observe which houses had flowers growing about them. I found that a home with attractive flowers in the yard or on the porch could be depended on to have a neat and efficient housekeeper—a woman who made the place a pleasant one to stay in."

Of course flowers in the front yard do not always prove a good housekeeper, but it is a good sign, just as a frank and pleasant face with a steady eye are signs of good character—and we all believe in signs.—Pathfinder Magazine.

Fire-Prevention Efforts

Through radio talks, addresses to organizations, distribution of home inspection forms to school children and self-inspection forms to business houses, placarding of fire hydrants and alarm boxes and showing of slides in motion picture houses, the various fire-prevention councils of the country have sought to spread propaganda against careless handling of inflammable materials.

Seventy-five per cent of all fires are caused by carelessness and it is estimated 10,000 persons lost their lives through fire in the United States last year, 30 per cent of the victims being children under ten years of age.

All Knew How to Run Town

Westchester, N. Y., advertised for a city manager asking only those with experience to apply. Still more than 2,000 letters came from men all over the country who, although they admitted they hadn't actually had any experience in that sort of work, were living in hopes the day might come when they could land a job as municipal manager just to show what they knew about running a town.—Cap-per's Weekly.

Homes Reflect Personality

People reflect their environment. Those who live in shabby, down-at-the-heels houses are likely to feel depressed and discouraged. We borrow much of our confidences and spirit from our surroundings. If they have nothing to give—no hope or confidence, no pride in home or joy in living—then they become a liability of such proportions that only the most herculean strength can resist them.

BAYER ASPIRIN is always SAFE

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS

UNLESS you see the name Bayer and the word genuine on the package as pictured here you can never be sure that you are taking genuine Bayer Aspirin tablets which thousands of physicians have always prescribed.

The name Bayer means genuine Aspirin. It is your guarantee of purity—your protection against imitations. Millions of users have proved that it is safe.

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Aspirin is the trade-mark of Bayer manufacture of monosodiumacetate of salicylic acid



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Noted English Writer Won't "Play" Typewriter

When I was in London in 1928 John Galsworthy showed me the manuscripts of nearly all his books. He cannot dictate and cannot play the typewriter; thus they are all in pen and ink, and their commercial value must be prodigious.

Prof. Carlton Wells of the University of Michigan calls my attention to an article in a review, quoting the Manchester Guardian, as follows: "They are worth a small fortune and they are certain to appreciate greatly in years to come. No other English writer, with the possible exception of Shaw, has such a vogue abroad, and almost every month sees an advance in the prices of his first editions."

"Galsworthy is one of the few modern authors who write everything in their own hand. He once told me that he found it impossible to think with a typewriter: in front of him, and he raised his eyes in mock horror when I mentioned the dictaphone. "In his study at Hampstead all

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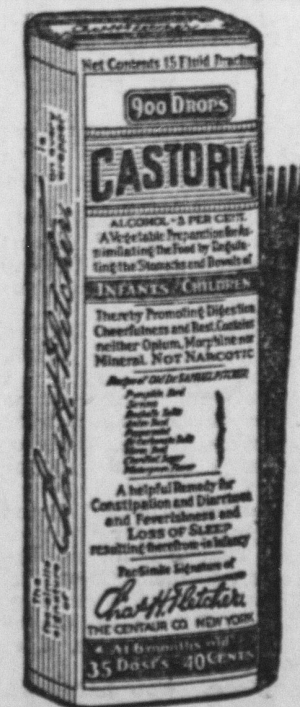
his manuscripts are carefully preserved in a row of red morocco boxes shaped like book covers. Those he has presented to the British Museum are to be seen in the Greville room." —William Lyon Phelps in Scribner's Magazine.

From the Greek

The word "cemetery" is a derivative of a Greek word which means sleeping place.

It is the admirer of himself, and not the admirer of virtue, that thinks himself superior to others.—Plutarch.

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British Aircraft in Demand

Aircraft manufacturers of Britain are receiving valuable orders for large transport type airplanes and flying boats for use in all parts of the world. Several big flying boats, each developing more than 2,000 horsepower, soon will be sent to

Japan. Orders also have been placed for large commercial monoplanes for use in long-distance air transportation in Australia. They are to carry 16 passengers at 100 miles an hour.

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