

Men of Mark in Maryland

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of the State


VOLUME II

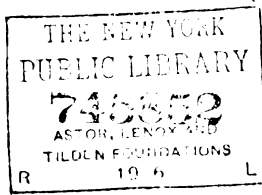
With an Introductory Chapter
on
The Growth of Maryland

By LYNN R. MEEKINS, A.M.

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ROBERT POLLOK KERR

ROBERT POLLOK KERR, clergyman, was born at Greensboro, Greene county, Alabama, on July 19, 1850. He is the son of John Poole and Sarah Howard (Webb) Kerr. His mother was a native of Granville county, North Carolina. His father, a man of dignity, industry, courtesy and piety, was a merchant and a prominent elder of the Presbyterian church. Doctor Kerr's father and grandfather are descendants of Sir Robert Kerr, of Scotland, a leader of the Covenanters. They came to the United States from Sanquhar, Scotland. His maternal great-grandfather, James Webb, removed to North Carolina from Essex county, Virginia. Doctor Kerr, when but six years of age, moved with his parents to Dubuque, Iowa. He was a sturdy boy, and, though his father was a man of wealth, he had taught his children to work and not be ashamed of it, the work. His mother, he says, "was one of the most remarkable women I ever knew," and he further affirms that "my father and mother, under God, made me what I am." He was always fond of books, and his favorite study has been history, especially the history of the church of God. After the death of his father in 1865, his family went to Arkansas, then to Missouri, and finally returned South. "When my father was dying," he says, "he told me he had always prayed that I might be a minister, and I told him I had always intended to be one." His college education was received at the William Jewell College, at Liberty, Missouri, where he graduated with first honors in 1870. He then entered the Union Theological Seminary at Hampden-Sidney, Virginia, receiving his certificate of graduation in 1873. In 1887 Doctor Kerr was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Washington and Lee University at Lexington, Virginia. Doctor Kerr has traveled extensively abroad and in the East, and is a fine linguist. He began active life as the pastor of a Presbyterian church at Lexington, Missouri, and has been pastor successively of churches in Thomasville, Georgia; Savannah, Georgia; Petersburg, Virginia; and of the First Presbyterian church at Richmond, Virginia, where he had remarkable success for nearly twenty years. Under Doctor Kerr's influence and ministration in the latter

church, the congregation grew to be one of the most powerful of the denomination in the Southern field. It increased in membership and prosperity in excess of any previous period in its history. Doctor Kerr's ability has been conspicuous in the councils of the church. He was the author of the famous "concurrent resolution" adopted at Atlanta in 1882, which was later passed by the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian church, and which served to bring closer together the two assemblies in this country. Doctor Kerr was the organizer of the Richmond Ministerial Union, and was president of the board of trustees of the Westminster School at Richmond, also president of the board of trustees of the Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, and president of the Presbyterian Orphanage of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church located at Fredericksburg, Virginia. He was president of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance of the Western Hemisphere, and is associated with the May Festival of Christian Unity, which meets annually in Richmond, and whose object is to show the purpose of all denominations to work for the uplifting of the world. In 1903, Doctor Kerr accepted a call to the pastorate of the Northminster Presbyterian church at Baltimore, which position he now holds, greatly beloved by the congregation. In spite of his many pastoral duties, Doctor Kerr has found time to add materially to the literature of the Presbyterian church. Among the books written by him are: "The History of Presbyterianism in All Ages," "Presbyterianism for the People," "The Voice of God in History," "Land of Holy Light," "Will the World Outgrow Christianity?" "History of the Covenanters," "Hymns of the Ages," "The Presbyterian Communion Class Catechism," and other minor works. For recreation and exercise, Doctor Kerr follows hunting and fishing during his vacations, which he usually spends in Canada. On September 17, 1873, Doctor Kerr married Miss Ellen T. Webb, of Nashville, Tennessee. They have had no children. His counsel to the American youth is given in a few words, "Fear God, and keep his commandments. Love God and your fellow man."