
Robert Thomas Kerlin

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structure with all modern improvements and equipment. It had accommodations for thirty patients, and employed fifteen persons including eight graduate nurses. The name was later changed to the Booker T. Washington Community Hospital when he turned it over to a group promising to sustain it, but Dr. Kenney remained with it until 1939 when he returned to the John A. Andrew Hospital. There he served until 1944 when he went into retirement at Montclair, New Jersey. This institution became a great help in the effort to provide better health facilities for neglected citizens of Newark, and the city finally took it over as the Community Hospital. Dr. Kenney, therefore, had again lived up to his fine record of answering the call of duty wherever it was his lot to serve.

Dr. Kenney married twice. His first wife died early and left no offspring. He married Frieda Frances Armstrong in 1913. They had four children: John Andrew, Jr., now a physician resident in dermatology in the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania; Oscar Armstrong, killed in an accident in the Air School at Tuskegee during the Second World War; Howard Washington, a physician practicing in New Jersey; and a daughter, Harriet Elizabeth, now married as Mrs. Quisenberry.

ROBERT THOMAS KERLIN

On the 15th of March Robert Thomas Kerlin died at his home in Cumberland, Maryland. He was an educator, author and reformer of the white race. He was born at Newcastle, Missouri on March 22, 1866, the son of Thomas L. and Nancy (Jeffries) Kerlin. His parents were slaveholders, but they were not defenders of the institution. In the settlement of an estate they were offered additional slaves but they refused to accept them.

Kerlin began his preparation for life at Central College, Fayette, Missouri. He studied a year at Johns Hopkins and later at the University of Chicago and Harvard. Finally at Yale he completed in 1906 the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In 1907 he married Adeline K. Koster of Jersey City. They had three children: Katharine Elizabeth, Elsa Adeline, and Constance Lee.

Kerlin began his career as professor of English at Missouri Valley College where he served from 1890 to 1894. He then entered upon the ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and served in that connection from 1895 to 1898. He next became the

chaplain to the Third Missouri Volunteers in the Spanish-American War. After this brief service he returned to the schoolroom as a professor of English. He did not tarry long at any of the institutions which he served. He taught at Missouri Valley College from 1901 to 1902, Southwestern University from 1902 to 1903, and the State Normal School at Warrensburg, Missouri from 1903 to 1906. He functioned as instructor in English at Yale from 1906 to 1907, as professor of literature at the State Normal School at Farmville in Virginia from 1908 to 1910, and at the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington from 1910 to 1921.

From this position he was dismissed for writing an open letter to the Governor of Arkansas protesting the hanging of the Negro survivors of the Elaine riot, who had merely returned the Ku Klux Klan fire upon them in a building where they had met to improve their status as sharecroppers. Kerlin went next to serve at the State Normal School at West Chester, Pennsylvania where he taught from 1922 to 1927; but there he showed himself such a champion of liberal causes that conservative Pennsylvania could not longer tolerate him. His last permanent employment as a teacher was at Potomac State College at Keyser, West Virginia, but there also he could not resist the appeal of liberal causes and the cry of the down-fallen and the underprivileged. He made himself just as unpopular at this post as he had done elsewhere and had to retire. Yet he had served in the meantime in various capacities elsewhere. He was associate editor of the *ARENA* from 1905 to 1906. He was a lecturer on English literature at the University of Vermont Summer School from 1911 to 1917, instructor for the American Expeditionary Force University at Beaune, France in 1919, lecturer on English Literature at the Philadelphia Labor College from 1925 to 1927, lecturer at Lincoln University in 1927, and lecturer in English literature and European History at Western Maryland College.

In order to express himself further he wrote a number of books. He published in 1897 a book of poems entitled *Mainly for Myself*. Next came out of his experiences in the Spanish-American War *The Camp Life of the Third Regiment*. His *The Church of the Fathers* appeared in 1901, *Theocritus in English Literature* in 1909 and *Milton's Minor Poems in Johnson's English Classics*. Near the end of his active career, however, the discrimination and segregation of the Negro became the burden of his appeal for a more liberal

attitude and he set forth such views in *The Voice of the Negro* in 1920 to show the demands of the Negro upon the democracy of America and the justice of their claims. He advanced the same thought out of the mouths of the literary leaders of the oppressed in publishing in 1923 *Negro Poets and Their Poems*.

The more he said in favor of the Negro, however, the more unpopular he became with all elements of his race except the few labor unions which accepted the Negro laborer as the equal of others. Kerlin was really a martyr in the cause of human freedom. Down to the very end of his career he worked hard to have the theatres of Cumberland abolish their policy of excluding Negroes. He was especially indignant that Negroes were not permitted to see PINKY, the moving picture based upon *Negro Life in the South* and intended to improve interracial relations. Kerlin conducted there a one-man picket line, trying to bring the managers to terms. It may be that such exposure at his advanced age was the immediate cause of his death.