

Men of Mark in Maryland

Biographies of Leading Men in the State

VOLUME I

With an Introductory Chapter
on
Maryland: Proprietary Province and State

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JAMES ALFRED PEARCE

PEARCE, JAMES ALFRED, lawyer and judge, was born at Chestertown, Kent county, Md., April 2, 1840, the son of James Alfred and Martha J. (Laird) Pearce. His father was an eminent lawyer, a member of the Maryland legislature, twice elected to the Federal house of representatives, and a United States senator for twenty years, during most of which time he was *chairman of the Committee of the Library of Congress*. Mrs. Pearce died when her son was five years of age. The family is descended from William Pearce, who came from England to the Eastern Shore about 1660, settling in the upper part of Kent county, which was given to Cecil in 1674 and returned to Kent in 1706. He was high sheriff of Cecil county, and his son, who bore the same name, was Presiding Judge of Kent county in 1714.

James Alfred Pearce grew up in his native town. Until he was fourteen years of age, he studied at home and then entered the preparatory department of Washington college at Chestertown, continuing in that institution for three years, when he was admitted to the College of New Jersey at Princeton, where he received the bachelor's degree in arts in 1860 and the master's degree in 1863. St. John's college, Annapolis, conferred upon him the degree of *Doctor of Laws* in 1904.

After graduation, he taught for a time in Washington college and studied law in Chestertown, and with Brown & Brune in Baltimore, choosing the legal profession by his own preference and with his father's approval. He was admitted to the bar in 1864. His early connection with Washington college has continued to the present day. He was *secretary of the Board of Trustees* for thirty-three years, from 1864 to 1897, and has been president of the Board since 1903.

On November 1, 1866, he was married to Eunice Rasin of St. Louis, Missouri. They have no children.

Next to the influence of home upon his young life Judge Pearce ranks as the most potent forces, association with Reverend Andrew

J. Sutton, principal of Washington college, one of his early instructors; the early companionship of men of character, and private study.

From 1867 to 1874, he served Kent county as its state's attorney; for ten years he was a member of the board of School Commissioners for the county, and, for the same length of time, he was a commissioner of Chestertown. In 1897, he was elected, as the nominee of the Democratic party, chief judge of the Second Judicial Circuit, and as such an associate judge of the State Court of Appeals, for a fifteen years' term, and has filled these offices to the present time. His political creed as a Democrat has always been fixed and positive. He is a member of the Protestant Episcopal church, and has been chancellor of the Diocese of Easton since 1883. His favorite exercises are walking and driving.