

**FILSON CLUB-PUBLICATIONS
NO. II. TRANSYLVANIA
UNIVERSITY. ITS ORIGIN,
RISE, DECLINE, AND FALL**

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Filson Club-Publications No. II. Transylvania University. Its Origin, Rise, Decline, and Fall by
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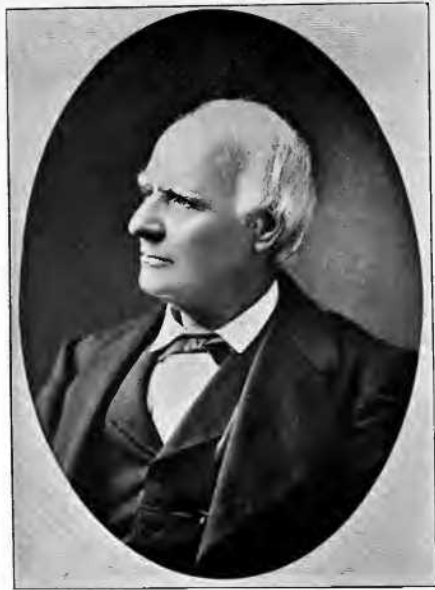
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ROBERT PETER & JOHANNA PETER

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ROBERT PETER, M. D.

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FILSON CLUB-PUBLICATIONS NO. 11.

Transylvania University

ITS ORIGIN, RISE, DECLINE, AND FALL.

PREPARED FOR THE FILSON CLUB BY
ROBERT PETER, M. D.,
AND HIS DAUGHTER, MISS JOHANNA PETER,
Members of the Club.

Read at the Club meetings in October and November, 1895.

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PREFACE.

TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY, located at Lexington, Kentucky, was the first college in the Valley of the Ohio. It took the initial step in the march of higher education west of the Alleghanies, and for this reason, if for no other, its beginning, its rise to lofty heights, its decline, and its end in nothing but a memory, can hardly ever cease to be of interest to the friends of learning. No university in this country was ever inaugurated on a broader and better plan. It was to be a central university, with a seminary in each county of the surrounding State to supply it with students. To inaugurate this system, each of the early counties in Kentucky was given six thousand acres of land by the State to secure the necessary buildings and start its seminary. Had this system been adhered to, Transylvania would to-day be one of the leading universities not only of this country but of the whole world. It was doomed, however, to be sacrificed upon the inconsiderate altar

of denominational antagonisms. Different and opposing religious sects struggled for its control, and in the conflict the University was consumed by the fervor of their contests. The history of various countries is full of bad deeds done in the good name of religion, but Kentucky has witnessed but little, if any thing, more sad than the quarrels of her religious denominations which were so disastrous to Transylvania University.

In the following pages the story of this primal seat of learning in the great transmontane wilderness, where so many and such great universities and colleges now flourish, is told so clearly and so simply and so truthfully that it can not fail both to please and to instruct the reader. During the three fourths of a century in which this University existed, most of the prominent citizens of Kentucky were connected with it, either as trustees, professors, or students, and the mention of their names in the course of the narrative must prove valuable to the many who now seek to trace their ancestry through Kentucky pioneers.

THOMAS SPEED,
Secretary.

INTRODUCTION.

WITH A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF DR. ROBERT PETER.

SOME two or three years ago my father, the late Doctor Robert Peter, then long past eighty years of age, promised to write for the Filson Club the History of Transylvania University. In preparing to fulfill this promise he found that, in order not to make the narrative too long, it would be expedient to separate the history of the Medical Department of Transylvania from that of the University proper. This he accordingly did, reserving the medical history for another monograph, and was in readiness to complete the literary history when extreme age and consequent death prevented the execution of his plans.

At the request of President Durrett, of the Filson Club, I have endeavored to put my father's manuscripts into a proper form for publication, and while I do not presume to say that this History of Transylvania University is all that my father's master hand could have made it, yet, as it is, it can hardly fail of being an interesting and valuable contribu-

tion to the annals of education in the West. And although in some portions I have been obliged to compile the text from some of his former writings on the subject, it is, with the exception of only a few paragraphs, entirely in my father's language.

Connected with Transylvania and devoted to her service almost from his first coming to Kentucky, in 1832—as student, professor, and trustee; for nearly twenty years Dean of the Medical Faculty; for half a century in her halls in one capacity or another, having every opportunity for studying her history, every interest in perpetuating her fame—he was the one best fitted of all others to depict the progress of this grand old institution.

It had been an often-expressed wish of his friends, and long his own intention, that he should write fully the story of Old Transylvania, her triumphs and her disappointments, but in an exceptionally busy life this labor of love was postponed for a more convenient season, until at last, when his design was about, in part at least, to be accomplished, age had undermined the splendid energy and ability which had ever marked him, and he was forced to leave unfinished what had seemed the easiest and most pleasant of tasks.