NORTH CAROLINA SOCIETY OF COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA.

By Rosa Pendleton Chiles.

"There be of them that have left a name behind them."

"For there are deeds that should not pass away, and names that must not wither."

"Did ever a man a valiant deed but a woman arose to sound his praises?"

"As the painter puts upon canvas the images and fancies of his imagination, making them real and tangible, so your society records upon bronze and stone the deeds of a brave people."

Organized in 1894 by the initiative and largely through the enthusiastic efforts of Mrs. George W. Kidder, the North Carolina Society of Colonial Dames of America, in its twenty-two years of patriotic life, has accomplished much of which not only the society but the State may be justly proud. And better than tangible achievement, has been the infusion into its membership and quietly through its membership, as well as by its public acts, into the life of the State an increasing love of the work for which the organization exists—to strengthen patriotism and to preserve in visible memorial and in the heart of an age whose sentiment is in danger of becoming dimmed by the intensity of its practical aims, deepened interest in that heroic past when the foundation of our country's greatness was laid upon a rock-bed of lofty purpose and valiant deed.

So rich is North Carolina in colonial achievement, that the effort to perpetuate the memory of it, much of which lay buried in unidentified sites and in unpublished archives, has commanded the most persistent and strenuous activities of the Colonial Dames of this State. Especially has this been true of the Dames of the Cape Fear, where local traditions abound and historic memories are associated with nearly every point on the river.

The State membership is large—now more than five hundred—and among the leaders many have come from the Cape Fear. Not being able to mention all who have aligned themselves with the highest purposes of the organization and through masterful leadership carried those purposes to fulfillment, consideration in this brief account will be given only to the work of three ladies of the Cape Fear who have been presidents of

the society—Mrs. George W. Kidder, Mrs. Gaston Meares, and Mrs. James Sprunt.

Mrs. Kidder, the first president, is a descendant of William Hill, whom Josiah Quincy visited at Brunswick in 1773 and found a man of exalted patriotism and warmly attached to the cause for which America was about to take up arms, and of his son, Capt. John Hill, a gallant and distinguished Continental officer of the Cape Fear. As was natural, therefore, she brought to the North Carolina Society of Colonial Dames of America, together with the lovely characteristics of Cape Fear womanhood, the devoted patriotism of her forefathers.

By her successful initiative, her high aims, and her unconquerable determination, Mrs. Kidder accomplished the important work of organization and of giving definite purpose to the labors of the society. In the start she emphasized the fact that the organization should not exist merely for the gratification of ancestral pride and the poetizing of patriotic sentiment, and under her incumbency one of the principal undertakings of the North Carolina Dames was begun—the erection of a monument to Cornelius Harnett and the civic and military heroes of the Revolution. The magnitude of this task was such that thirteen years were spent in its completion, but during this long period there was no lessening of steadfast purpose, no diminution of persistent effort.

Mrs. Kidder was succeeded in the presidency by Mrs. Gaston Meares, a descendant of Moses John DeRosset, mayor of Wilmington when the men of the Cape Fear successfully resisted the Stamp Act in 1766, and the widow of the lamented Col. Gaston Meares, who fell at Malvern Hill in 1862, while commanding the Third Regiment of North Carolina Troops—a woman whose talent and eminent position imparted strength to the society and energized its efforts. Mrs. Kidder says of her that she gave the work of the Monument Committee "fresh impetus, for she brought to it all the influence of a masterful mind and a strong personality." She also did much towards systematizing the work of the society throughout the State by the appointment of committees of research in the counties to coöperate with the head organization in Wilmington. In 1906 Mrs. Meares retired, and was succeeded by Mrs. James Sprunt, who for some time had been vice president.

Mrs. Sprunt was a descendant of the distinguished William Bryan and his wife, Lady Alice Needham, of colonial times, and