

IN MEMORIAM

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ROBERT LEWIS DABNEY

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Dabney, Charles William,
1855-1945,
In memoriam

Shelf.....



ROBERT LEWIS DABNEY,
Hampden Sidney, Va., 1872 or '73

✓
IN MEMORIAM

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ROBERT LEWIS DABNEY

Born, March 5th, 1820

Died, January 3rd, 1898

“Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.”

The University of Tennessee Press
Knoxville,
1899

THE TEACHER AND FRIEND.

BY REV. DR. THORNTON R. SAMPSON.

On Sunday afternoon, January 30th, 1898, memorial services were held in the Opera House, at Sherman, Texas, by Mildred Lee Camp of United Confederate Veterans, to commemorate the patriotism and virtues of General L. S. Ross and Major R. L. Dabney, D. D.

After the address had been made in honor of General Ross, the Rev. Dr. Thornton R. Sampson, president of Austin College, a son of Rev. Dr. Francis S. Sampson, and a pupil of Dr. Dabney while he was professor in Union Theological Seminary, spoke, in part, as follows:

"But peace too hath her heroes. In the death of Dr. Robert L. Dabney not only has the South lost a most valiant, courageous and persistent defender, both with sword and pen, but the Southern Presbyterian Church her greatest theologian and the world one of her greatest teachers." Then followed a brief outline of his life and work. * * * *

"It is not upon the virtues of Major Dabney as a soldier or upon the ability of Dr. Dabney as a theologian that I feel called to dwell today, for his published works, 'Defense of Virginia,' 'Life of Stonewall Jackson' and 'Systematic Theology' speak for themselves; but it is a glad duty to bear testimony to his excellence as a teacher and his faithfulness as a friend, which are less generally known.

"Dr. Dabney was a born teacher, and he loved his work. It has been my privilege, as a student, to sit at the feet of some of the most distinguished scholars and teachers of America, Great Britain and the continent of Europe, such as McGuffey, Gildersleeve, Davidson, Delitzsch and Luthardt, but Dr. Dabney was the peer of any and in some respects the superior of them all. He always left his impress upon the mind of his students. One might differ with him in conclusions but could never deny the force and aptness of his reasoning. His thorough mastery of the subject, his clear and thorough analysis of it, his forceful, apt illustrations and his sympathetic recognition of the students' difficulties gave him most remarkable force as a teacher. No one

who desired to learn could fail to make progress or get profit under his lucid, inspiring tuition.

"It is, however, chiefly of another striking side of Dr. Dabney's character that I wish to speak. Some who knew Dr. Dabney only through his publications have formed the idea that he was a stern, severe man lacking in sympathy and affection. It cannot be denied that some expressions, in a certain class of his articles, especially those concerning the civil war, have given just ground for such inference.

"But it should be stated and it can be asserted with all positiveness, for it is a fact to which all who came in contact with him can testify, that such was not the case. He was a kind neighbor, a tender and most affectionate husband, an over-indulgent parent and a most faithful friend. In fact, he scarcely seemed, with all his acumen, to be able to see the faults of a friend and his judgment possibly failed him oftener in speaking or writing of those whom he loved than at any other time.

"All of his old students will testify to this striking characteristic, but the most impressive illustration can be found in his devotion to the memory of his early friend, Dr. Francis S. Sampson. The first published work from his pen was an enthusiastic memorial of him and the last work of his life, the morning of the day of his death was a glowing tribute to the memory of the same friend for whom his affectionate admiration seemed to grow with his years.

"It is an honor and a privilege that I enjoy today, as I stand before this great audience to testify to the undiminished affection of this great man for his early friend, my father, who died before my life could lisp his name, forty-five years ago. Nothing could have been more beautiful than this love of a strong man, for one whose gifts, whatever they were, excited no sentiment but admiration in him.

"Just three days before the death of Dr. Dabney I made a pilgrimage to his home in Southern Texas, and can never forget his warm welcome, his sympathetic interrogatories, his prophetic counsels, giving evidence still of his warm affection for his old friend which neither blindness, nor age, nor time could chill.

"He, indeed, 'loved him as his own soul.' "