

THE  
LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
Robert Lewis Dabney.

BY  
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RICHMOND, VA. :  
THE PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.



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R. E. MAGILL, *Secretary*

1903

PRINTED BY  
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON  
RICHMOND, VA.

He soon found agreeable society, as his later letters show. However, his sojourn at the White, and his similar sojourn at the Hot, both failed to do him any real good. He suffered an attack of his old malady while at the Hot, and returned home in late September in very low spirits, so that his friends were much worried. Vaughan, hearing how matters were, wrote:

"I do not think that you have cause for despondency. I'll tell you the reason I think so, and beg, at the same time, that you will not think me a flatterer when I say I cannot believe that God will take from his vineyard a laborer so well prepared by his creative hand and his providential superintendence of your education before the blood of a single cluster of grapes has stained his hand at the wine-press. So cheer up. Don't let a relaxing and stupefying foreboding settle upon your mind; but if you feel disposed to give up, call to your aid the resources of your own healthy intellect, and if evils come, meet them with a cheerful front, and measure the length of infliction by the strength of a faithful endurance. You may read with a smile this homily from your blue-devilishly disposed friend and pitcher; but, I tell you, avoid depression of spirits as much as possible, because I know, by a sad experience, how bad the effects are upon the mind, the body and the heart. It starves and clogs the energies of all these, prevents close and accurate thinking by dissipating the mind in wild and dreary reveries, sours the temper, makes one careless of health and the means of preserving it, and, in fine, is the very worst state of mind in its practical influence on a man's usefulness of anything I know."<sup>6</sup>

Such words were hardly much needed by a man whose character was so strong as Mr. Dabney's, but they could hardly fail to be helpful.

It makes little difference where a young minister goes to work; if he has learning, talents, and character fitting for a wider sphere of usefulness, and is not bound by something very peculiar in his circumstances and accidents, representatives of the wider spheres will very soon have their eyes on him. So Robert L. Dabney found it. He had hardly begun his labors in Louisa before the session of the Presbyterian Church in Norfolk invited him to become stated supply, for a period of six months, at the rate of six hundred dollars per annum, alleging their unanimous view that he would probably be called as pastor as a result of this term of service. Six months later the church in

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from C. R. Vaughan, dated October 3, 1846.