

CHISWELL DABNEY is the youngest son of my grandfather Dabney. He is a worthy representative of his ancestors in all these moral qualities for which they were distinguished. His children, George, William, Elizabeth, Lucy, and Catherine, you are intimately acquainted with. I shall content myself, therefore, with exhorting you to profit by the living example of this excellent uncle.

JOHN DABNEY, my father, was the second son of my grandfather Dabney. Discovering in him at an early age the indications of an excellent capacity,---my grandfather strained his slender means to give my father a liberal education. . . .Such was the scarcity of competent teachers in those days that the instruction to be obtained in the ordinary schools. . . . was but scanty and imperfect, and to avail himself of these moderate advantages, my father, unwilling to burthen his own family with the expense, resolved to defray it principally with the fruits of his own exertions. . . . He solicited the humble situation of usher with the Reverend John D. Blair, who kept a classical school in the city of Richmond, and who from personal friendship to my grandfather, was disposed to afford him every aid in the laudable effort to improve himself. Under the auspices of this gentleman he attained a tolerable proficiency in the Latin tongue, a knowledge of the French language, and some acquaintance with the abstract sciences. He had previously spent some time at an obscure institution, called Rumford Academy, in the County of Hanover. . . . I do not know what was the course of instruction, or what facilities it afforded, but I presume they must have been very limited, and that my father was mainly indebted to Mr. Blair for his very moderate attainments. His sense of the benefits which he derived from that quarter was clearly demonstrated by his warm attachment through life to that gentleman, as a further evidence of which he bestowed the name of Blair on his first-born.¹

With these slender scholastic advantages, aided by such information as could be acquired by general reading, my father determined to undertake the study of law. For this purpose he went to reside with his relation, Judge Edmund Winston, under whose supervision he qualified himself for his profession.

About the age of twenty-one my father commenced the practice of law in the town of Lynchburg, then a small and thriving village. His prospects were flattering, for he speedily won confidence and made many friends by his steadiness, his legal knowledge, his assiduous attention to business, his sound sense, and his prepossessing deportment.

He married my mother in the early part of the year 1794 and, after remaining some years in Lynchburg and its vicinity, finally established himself on the farm where I now reside. ("Vaucluse" located in Campbell County between Highways 501 and 29, near Gladys, Va. The place is now (1941) owned by Baxter Magee. The house was burned years ago.)

About the year 1804 or 5 he was elected to the Senate of Virginia where he served the regular term of four years. Of political life he soon became weary, for it was an element uncongenial to his nature, and as soon as the period for which he was elected expired, he returned with delight to the bosom of his family and his nabitual pursuits. . . . In the Senate of Virginia his standing was that of a man of sound practical sense, enlightened in his legislative views, faithful and diligent in his application to public business, and loyal to his political connections.

. . . .my father continued to pursue his profession with undiminished industry and success till the year 1813, when Judge Winston, his old friend and patron, having resigned his

¹ The writer of these Reminiscences, John Blair Dabney.