



SELECT REMAINS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM NEVINS. D. D.

WITH A MEMOIR.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

"He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God."—*John*

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN S. TAYLOR,
CORNER OF PARK-ROW AND NASSAU-STREET,
OPPOSITE THE CITY HALL.

1837.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six, by RUFUS L. NEVINS, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.

HENRY W. REES, STEREOTYPER,
45 GOLD STREET, NEW YORK.

D. FANSHAW, PRINTER.

righteousness, and received for the sword of faith, which he wielded so skilfully, the palm of victory Heaven grant, that whilst his death warns *us* of the necessity of being always ready for our *own* change, his beautiful example may animate *us* to increased zeal and devotion in the great and good cause which has in his removal lost so able a minister."

The following remarks on Dr. Nevins' character, are from the pen of Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, in the Theological Seminary at Princeton. They are, by permission, published :

"You request me to give you my impressions respecting our beloved and lamented friend, the late Dr. NEVINS, of Baltimore, as a *Student*, as a *Preacher*, as a *Gentleman*, and as a *Christian*. It is with mournful pleasure that I comply with your request ; for I have seldom cherished toward any man a warmer or more heartfelt affection ; and I know not that I was ever a more sincere mourner on the decease of any friend out of my own family, than on his.

"My acquaintance with William Nevins, as a *Student*, commenced in November, 1816, when he entered our seminary, with testimonials of having graduated in Yale College, and of being, if I mistake not, a member of the Church in that institution. His appearance was rather more than usually juvenile, but polished, pleasant, and attractive ; and throughout his whole course, he was one of the most amiable, respect-

ful, and orderly students in the whole house. It was understood, that during the early part of his connexion with the college, he was entirely careless about divine things, and even somewhat disposed to be dissipated, but that in a revival of religion, of considerable extent and power in the college, he became decidedly pious. In adverting to the circumstances attending this interesting event, which he sometimes did to his intimate friends, he spoke of the conversation and efforts of the Rev. *Asa Thurston*, now one of the respected and beloved missionaries at the Sandwich Islands, as having been particularly blessed to his benefit. His application to study, while with us, was exemplary. It was not, indeed, of that peculiar and indefatigable character, which was manifested by some of his companions in study. Yet it may be said with truth, that he was a diligent student, and that he always appeared well at examinations.

“To those who saw our young friend while he was in the seminary only occasionally, and in company, his seriousness did not appear to be very marked or deep. He exhibited at that time, perhaps more than in after life, great alternations of feeling. He was often most distressingly dyspeptic, and frequently manifested all that depression of spirits, which those who have had experience of that malady, in its more severe forms, know well how to appreciate. At other times, his spirits might be said to be exuberant; and, as it was much more frequently in the latter, than in the former state of mind, that he appeared in company, he was considered by most of those who knew him, to be rather

remarkable for cheerfulness and vivacity. Those who knew him most intimately, however, knew that in retirement, he manifested habits which satisfied them that he was not only unfeignedly pious, but that his piety was considerably above the ordinary standard.

“While Mr. Nevins was a member of the seminary, he was particularly distinguished for the taste and elegance of his compositions. They were highly rhetorical, imaginative, and ornate. He wrote poetry as well as prose, with very honorable success. When he pronounced any of his exercises in public, as our rules require, he always appeared well, and sometimes remarkably so. Several of these public exercises at the time, made a strong impression, and are still remembered with interest by some, at least, of those who heard them.

“Our lamented friend, at the time of which I speak, manifested nothing of that spirit of laziness, vanity, or presumption, which has prompted hundreds of our pupils to withdraw prematurely from the studies of the seminary, and engage in the work of the ministry, before they were half prepared for its arduous and responsible labors. He felt the need and importance of mature study; and went through the complete course prescribed in the institution, and received its accustomed testimonial to that amount, toward the close of September, 1819. And, as the labors of the former class of students, have seldom failed to manifest, in a very striking and humiliating manner, their lack of the requisite furniture, so the subsequent labors of our beloved friend, showed that he had laid a solid

foundation of theological and ecclesiastical, as well as of literary acquirement.

“As a *Preacher*, Dr. Nevins greatly excelled. When he first commenced his labors as a minister of the gospel, he carried with him into the pulpit that love of rhetorical ornament, and that reign of imagination, which had distinguished his compositions in the seminary. And even for a short time after he became settled as a pastor, his sermons partook more of this character, than his more mature judgment and practice sanctioned. But even then, his pious ardor, his soundness in the faith, and his decidedly evangelical views, and strain of preaching, evinced that he was really a devoted and faithful servant.

“When he had been four or five years in the ministry, it pleased God to bless his labors in a remarkable manner. His church experienced, what, I believe it had never before known, a precious revival of religion, in which a large addition was made to the members of his church, and a change decisively for the better in the whole aspect of his congregation. He himself received a new unction. His preaching became more solemn, direct, pointed, and richly evangelical—more adapted at once to awaken the careless, and to edify the pious.

“During the last seven or eight years of his life, I considered Dr. Nevins as among the very best preachers in the United States. His sermons were sufficiently ornate and elegant to satisfy the most delicate taste; simple, perspicuous, and plain, without being common place; rich in sentiment and doctrine, and delivered

with an animation, a force, and a striking earnestness, adapted to recommend them to every class of hearers. You are, no doubt, aware that he was a *memoriter* preacher; and on the whole, the most natural and impressive *memoriter* preacher I ever heard. He seemed to commit to memory with great ease, and to call forth and deliver what he had deposited in his memory, without the least hesitation or embarrassment. Most of the *memoriter* preachers that I have heard, had a formal reciting manner. In him scarcely any thing of this kind appeared. His intonations and his whole manner were entirely natural. He might easily have been mistaken for an extemporaneous speaker, had not the richness, the connexion, and the mature judgment and taste which his discourses seldom failed to display, evinced careful preparation.

“As a *Gentleman*, Dr. Nevins was highly exemplary. He had, indeed, nothing of the splendor, or courtly formality of fashionable manners. His deportment in company, though polished and respectful, was as simple, easy, unaffected, and unassuming as possible. He had about him as much of what the French call *naïveté*, as I almost ever saw in a man so serious and dignified as he habitually was. He had, indeed, in his common manners, the simplicity of a child, which exerted a very winning influence among his associates. One of the most decisive tests of the character of a *Christian gentleman*, is a capacity to appear well and respectably in any company, from the highest to the lowest. When brought to this test, no one who knew our lamented friend, would consider him as likely to

be found wanting. His knowledge of the world, his gentleness, his respectfulness, and his benevolence, were a passport in all society.

“In contemplating the character of Dr. Nevins as a *Christian*, you will readily perceive, from what I have before stated, that I regard him as having occupied a high place. His growth in grace, after he left us, and after he was clothed with the ministerial office, was not only distinctly perceptible, but very striking. The circumstances of my being called upon, at his request, to preach the usual sermon at his ordination, led to an intercourse somewhat special between him and myself. I was repeatedly with him in Baltimore; and he generally made my house his home, during his frequent visits to Princeton, so that I had no small opportunity of observing his spirit and conversation; and I can truly say, that every successive time I saw him, or heard him preach, he appeared to me to have made sensible progress in wisdom, zeal, fidelity, and devotedness. His conversation, his prayers, his plans, and his most unguarded sallies of thought or feeling, were those of a man who made the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom the great object of his pursuit.

“The closing scene of his life, as I learned from those who were with him,—for it was in my power to see him but once during his last illness, and that for a few moments only,—was in harmony with all his preceding evidences of piety, or rather bore a testimony in favor of his piety, more bright and animating than ever. On this, however, I will not enlarge, as you were with him during a number of his last days, and had every oppor-

tunity of witnessing the patience, the concern for the kingdom of Christ, and the joyful hope, which so eminently marked his gradual descent to the tomb, and which seemed to grow brighter and brighter, until he reached, as I have no doubt, unclouded day.

“In him, I have lost a dear friend, and the Church an eminently devoted and useful minister of the gospel. But it is all right. *‘Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice. Clouds and darkness are around about him; but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.’*”

“I am, my dear sir, with much regard, your friend and brother, in those bonds which can never be broken.

“SAMUEL MILLER.

“*Princeton, January 29, 1836.*”

Dr. Nevins was a very valuable writer, especially in the latter part of his life. Two volumes of his writings, one on Practical Subjects in Divinity, the other on Popery, have recently issued from the press of the American Tract Society, as standard publications. He also wrote six tracts; three of which were premium tracts. Five of them have been published by the American Tract Society. They are entitled, “The Great Alternative.” “What have I done?” “What must I do?” “I will give liberally;” and “Don’t break the Sabbath.” The other is, “On the subject of supplying the accessible population of the whole world with the Word of God, within a definite period.” This last tract is one of unusual power. It will be found among the following papers. Some of the others,

are of uncommon excellence. Those already published have been blessed, and since his death, seem to be more so than ever. Dr. Nevins never published but two sermons. These appeared in the *National Preacher*, and are excellent. In regard to authorship, Dr. Nevins wrote as follows :

“ *Baltimore, December 9, 1834.*

“ I find that the habit I have got into of writing for the press, has made my hours pass much more agreeably than otherwise they would. I have written a great deal since my affliction. I have articles on hand for the *Observer* for several weeks ; last week I wrote a tract ; and, I have several other things in preparation. I have had many prayers answered. For several years, I almost daily prayed that I might be permitted to produce *one* useful tract,—never thinking to go beyond that, and hardly expecting to accomplish that much. My ambition for authorship never extended further. But God has already enabled me to do much more.”

Often does he, in his discourses and correspondence, hold language expressive of the great kindness of his affectionate people. That kindness deeply affected him. In no instance does he seem to think more of such kindness, than when his mind might be supposed to be least turned to *any* earthly friends. In a letter dated January 29, 1835, he says :