MEMOIR OF DR. MARTIN BENSON, BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER (1735—1752),

COMPILED BY THE REV. MARTIN E. BENSON, RECTOR OF RINGWOULD, KENT.

MARTIN BENSON, the subject of this memoir, was born in the Rectory House, Cradley, in the county of Hereford, April 23rd, 1689. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, his ancestors were settled and possessed of considerable landed property in the county of Hereford. George Benson, D.D., was, in that and the following reign, a Canon in the Cathedral of Hereford, and his grandson, of the same name, was in 1671 a prebendary of Worcester, and afterwards (until the time of his death) Dean of the Cathedral of Hereford.

Dean Benson married Catherine, the daughter of Samuel Fell, D.D., of Christ Church, Oxford, who, for his zeal and adherence to the royal cause, was, during the Commonwealth, ejected from all his preferments.

By this marriage, Dean Benson became brother-in-law to Bishop Fell, Dean and Bishop of Oxford. The son of Dean Benson, of the name of John, was collated by Bishop Croft to a stall in the Cathedral of Hereford, and (on the resignation of his father) in 1682, to the Rectory of Cradley, in the same county. He married the daughter of Benjamin Martin, Esq., of Oxfordshire, and of this marriage the immediate object of this memoir was the third and youngest son, being baptized by the name of Martin, in compliment to his mother's family. In his fifteenth year, he was placed at the Charter House, whence he proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1706. Here he soon distinguished himself, passing his time with credit to himself until he took his degrees, and in 1712 he became, on the nomination of one of the Canons, a student of Christ Church. This gave a more decided bias to his future prospects, and from that time he seems to have determined on taking Holy Orders. During his college life, Mr. Benson was most fortunate in the acquaintances and friendships which he formed. The first of these (as most dear to him) was Mr. Edward Talbot, second son of Dr. Talbot, at that time Bishop of Oxford.

He was a member of Oriel College, and, though somewhat younger, of nearly the same standing in the University with Mr. Benson. There was a concurrence of disposition, sentiment, and pursuit, which united them in the firmest friendship, and proved the means of a mutual introduction to their several connections. Amongst these, the introduction which his intimacy with Mr. Talbot procured him into the family of his father, the Bishop, was of great and immediate advantage to him. Another friendship contracted in this circle was with Mr. Rundle, who was at this time student of Exeter College, and was also introduced by Mr. Talbot to his father. It was somewhat later in his academical life, but still through the same channel, that he commenced his acquaintance with Mr. Joseph Butler, afterwards the learned author of the "Analogy of Religion to Nature."

Mr. Butler was a member of a dissenting family of Wantage, in Berkshire, and was at first educated with a view to the Presbyterian ministry. But as time went on, his views were expanded, and he determined to take Holy Orders in the Church of England, and, with this view, became a member of Oriel College, Oxford. There he soon formed an acquaintance with Mr. Talbot, and this was naturally productive of an introduction to Mr. Benson, with whom he commenced a lasting friendship, which conduced much to their mutual happiness and advantage. In 1713 and 1715, Mr. Benson was ordained Deacon and Priest, but he still continued to reside in Oxford; became one of the tutors of his College, and went through several of its principal offices. During his residence in the University at this time, he had under his charge many young men of birth and fortune, amongst them two, with whom he became more intimately and permanently connected—the Earl of Huntingdon and Lord Leominster. After spending the greater part of the last two years of his academical life in the tuition of these two pupils, he accompanied the latter in his continental tour, on which they started in the year 1717. It was during this tour that he met with a valuable but somewhat eccentric character, with whom he commenced a friendship which was renewed on their return home, and maintained to their latest day. The person alluded to was Mr. Berkely, the afterwards celebrated Bishop of Cloyne. Mr. Berkely had several

years before been a resident in Italy with his friend and patron, the Earl of Peterborough. He was now in 1718 on a tour with the son of Sir George Ashe, Bishop of Clogher, and was intending to make a lengthened residence in Italy.

Many were the advantages which accrued from this fortunate meeting. Mr. Benson and his pupil were enabled to avail themselves of the previous scientific labours of Mr. Berkely, and in the amplest manner to gratify their taste in viewing and examining all that was so peculiarly interesting to them in that country of intellectual delight.

From Italy he, in course of time, passed on to Paris. At this period Paris afforded a good school for the study of medicine, and it was usual for English students, who wished to perfect themselves in that science, to pass the latter period of their probation in attendance on the professors and eminent practitioners of that city. Amongst other English at that time residing in Paris for this purpose was Mr. Secker, a gentleman but a few years younger than Mr. Benson, and the intimate friend, fellow-student, and correspondent of Mr. Butler. Mr. Secker was of a family attached to Presbyterian principles in the county of Nottingham, and, like his friend Mr. Butler, was originally destined by his parents for the ministry. But not being able to satisfy himself on some theological points, he determined (rather than hastily embark in a profession which he might hereafter feel inclined to relinquish) to prepare himself for some other course of life, and, with this view, was pursuing the study of physic in Paris. The conflict in his mind on the subject of his religious doubts was advancing to a termination about the time when Mr. Benson commenced his acquaintance with him, and it can scarcely be doubted but that, in the friendly intercourse which then took place between them, this subject formed part of their conversation.

It was, as it seems, about this time that Mr. Secker communicated to his friend Mr. Butler, his inclination to conform to the Church of England. Mr. Benson preceded him in his return to England by a few months, and when the party united in their native country, with the accession of their common friend Mr. Talbot, Mr. Secker's maturing sentiments were confirmed, and

he determined to become not only a *member*, but a *minister* of that Church, in behalf of whose teaching he had so deliberately judged and conscientiously decided. And he was accordingly some time afterward ordained by his friend and future patron, Bishop Talbot.

Mr. Benson's professional engagement with Lord Leominster having satisfactorily terminated, and his connection with the young Earl of Huntingdon having ripened into a well-grounded friendship, he was considered as on a fair road to high ecclesiastical preferment —but this was not the channel whereby he was advanced to his preferments.

Soon after his return from the Continent, he rejoined the society to which he had been previously so much attached in the Talbot family.

The Bishop had some time since been translated from the see of Oxford to that of Salisbury ; and in January, 1720, Mr. Benson experienced the commencement of that patronage, which he afterwards partook of more fully, being then collated by him to the prebendal stall of Ilfracombe in his cathedral.

His friend, Mr. Edward Talbot, had been promoted by his father to the Archdeaconry of Berkshire. This preferment enabled him to marry ; and the object of his choice was Miss Martin, a near relative of Mr. Benson's, and the intimate friend and companion of his sister Catherine. This marriage was celebrated under the happiest auspices ; but before the close of the same year Mr. Talbot was seized with the small-pox, and to the great grief of all who knew him, the disease terminated fatally.

It was a gratifying token of their deceased friend's warmth of affection that (on his death-bed) he had strongly recommended to the future patronage of his father, his three most valued friends, Benson, Butler, and Secker—a legacy which the venerable Bishop did not fail most conscientiously to discharge. The first-fruits of this pious intention of the good Bishop was to confer on Mr. Benson the Archdeaconry of Berkshire, which had just been so sadly vacated by the death of his son.

To Bishop Talbot he now became professionally attached (as one of his archdeacons) and in the pleasing discharge of that part of his obligations, which he

seemed to owe to his departed friend, he devoted much of his time to him: whereby he at once satisfied his sense of duty and indulged his inclination.

It was at this time also that Mr. Benson strengthened the friendship which had been commenced with Mr. Secker in Paris, and with Mr. Berkely in Italy, and so five men, who in future became remarkable, were closely associated together, "Secker, Berkely, Rundle, Benson, and Butler."

In 1722 Bishop Talbot was translated from Salisbury to Durham. This was very shortly followed by his promotion of Butler and Secker, Rundle and Benson, to preferments in his new diocese, the latter being appointed to a stall in Durham Cathedral. From this time, having no parochial engagement, and the preferment which he held in the Diocese of Sarum requiring but a partial attention, Mr. Benson made his prebendal house at Durham the chief place of his abode. His three friends were in the immediate neighbourhood, and one of them (Secker) about this time married his sister. This seems to have been the happiest period of Mr. Benson's life, surrounded as he was by those in whose welfare he was most interested, who had travelled with him thus far in their professional lives, and who were destined hereafter to maintain a like equality of success. Of this course of happiness he was soon to experience a diminution (if that may be called such which most men would estimate very differently), in a further accession of preferment.

It was unsolicited, but nevertheless it was pleasing, as the offer came not only from a relation, but from a long-tried and much-valued friend. This was Browne Willis, Esq., of Whaddon Hall, Bucks, principally known to the world in the character of an antiquarian. An amusing sketch of this quaint person is drawn by Miss Catherine Talbot, grand-daughter of Bishop Talbot, in one of her letters, dated "Rectory-house, St. James', January 2nd, 1738-9:—

"You know Browne Willis, or at least it is not my fault that you do not, for when at any time any of his oddities have peculiarly struck my fancy, I have writ you whole volumes about him. However, that you may not be forced to recollect how I have formerly tired you, I will repeat, that with one of the honestest hearts in the world, he has one of the oddest heads that ever dropt from the moon. Extremely well versed in coins, he knows hardly anything of mankind; and you may judge what

kind of education such an one is likely to give to four girls, who have had no female directress to polish their behaviour, or any other habitation than a great rambling mansion-house in a country village. As by his little knowledge of the world he has ruined a fine estate, that was when he first had it, £2000 per annum, his present circumstances oblige him to an odd-headed kind of frugality, that shows itself in the slovenliness of his dress, and makes him think London too extravagant an abode for his daughters: at the same time that his zeal for antiquities makes him think an old copper farthing very cheaply bought with a guinea, and any journey properly undertaken, that will bring him to some old cathedral, on the Saint's-day to which it is dedicated. As if you confine the natural growth of a tree, it will shoot out in a wrong place, in spite of his expensiveness, he appears saving in every article of life that people would expect him otherwise in; and in spite of his frugality, his fortune I believe grows worse and worse every day. I have told you before that he is the dirtiest creature in the world; so much so, that it is quite disagreeable to sit by him at table; yet he makes one suit of clothes serve him at least two years; and then his great-coat has been transmitted down, I believe, from generation to generation ever since Noah. Sunday he was quite a beau. The Bishop of Gloucester is his idol: and if Mr. Willis were Pope, St. Martin, as he calls him, would not wait a minute for canonization. To honour last Sunday as it deserved, after having run about all the morning to the St. George's churches, whose difference of hours permitted him, he came to dine with us in a tie wig, that exceeds indeed all description. 'Tis a tie wig (the very colour of it is inexpressible) that he has had, he says, these nine years; and of late it has lain by at his barber's, never to be put on but once a year in honour of the Bishop of Gloucester's birth-day. But you will say what is all this to my engagement this morning? Why, you must know, Browne distinguishes his four daughters into the *Lions* and the *Lambs*. The Lambs are very good and very insipid; they were in town about ten days, that ended the beginning of last week; and now the Lions have succeeded them, who have a little spirit of rebellion, that makes them infinitely more agreeable than their sober sisters. The Lambs went to every Church Browne pleased every day; the Lions came to St. James' Church on St. George's day: the Lambs thought of no higher entertainment than going to see some collections of shells; the Lions would see everything and go everywhere. The Lambs dined here one day, were thought good awkward girls, and then were laid out of our thoughts for ever. The Lions dined with us on Sunday, and were so extremely diverting that we spent all yesterday morning, and are engaged to spend all this, in entertaining them, and going to a Comedy, that I think has no ill-nature in it; for the simplicity of these girls has nothing blameable in it, and the contemplation of such unassisted nature is infinitely amusing. They follow Miss Jenny's rule of *never being strange in a strange place*, yet in them this is not boldness. I could send you a thousand traits of them, if I were sure they would not lose by being writ down, but there is no imitating that inimitable naiveté, which is the grace of their character. They were placed in your seat on Sunday. I wondered to have heard no remarks on the Prince and Princess; their remarks on everything else are admirable. As they sat in the Drawing-room before dinner one of them called to Mrs. Secker, '*I wish you would give me a glass of sack!*' The Bishop of Oxford (Secker) came in; and one of them broke out very abruptly, '*But we heard every word of the sermon where we sat; and a very good sermon it was,*' added she with a decisive nod. The Bishop of Gloucester gave them tickets to go to a play, and one of them took great pains to repeat to him, till he heard it,

'*I would not rob you, but I know you are very rich and can afford it; for I ben't covetous, indeed I an't covetous.*' Poor girls! their father will make them go out of town to-morrow, and they begged very hard that we would all join in entreating him to let them stay a fortnight, as their younger sisters have done; but all our entreaties were in vain, and to-morrow the poor Lions return to their den in the stage-coach. Indeed, in his birthday tie-wig, he looked so like the Father in the farce Mrs. Secker was so diverted with, that I wished a thousand times for the invention of Scapin, and I would have made no scruple of assuming the character, and inspiring my friends with the laudable spirit of rebellion. I have picked out some of the dullest of their traits to tell you. They pressed us extremely to come and breakfast with them at their lodgings, four inches square, in Chapel Street, at eight o'clock in the morning, and bring a stay-maker and the Bishop of Gloucester with us. We put off the engagement till eleven, sent the staymaker to measure them at nine, and Mrs. Secker and I went, and found the ladies quite undressed; so that instead of taking them to Kensington Gardens as we promised, we were forced, for want of time, to content ourselves with carrying them round Grosvenor Square into the Ring, where, for want of better amusement, they were fain to fall upon the basket of dirty sweetmeats and cakes that an old woman is always teazing you with there, which they had nearly dispatched in a couple of rounds. It were endless to tell you all thathas inexpressibly diverted me in their behaviour and conversation. I have yet told you nothing; and yet I have, in telling that nothing, wasted all the time that my heart ought to have been employed in saying a thousand things to you that it is more deeply interested in. I wanted to express a thousand sentiments; but I hope you know them already, and at present my time is all spent. If you have a mind to a second part (which I assure you will far exceed the first), of the memoir of the Lions, tell me so, and you shall have it, when you please, for there is no fear of my forgetting what is fixed on my memory, by such scenes of mirth.—Yours most faithfully, "C. TALBOT."

To this lively sally from the pen of an accomplished young woman of eighteen, it will be allowable to subjoin the more soberly drawn character of Mr. Willis from the pen of his learned friend, contemporary, and associate, Dr. Ducard, in his memoir on the subject to the Society of Antiquarians, 1760:—

"He was indefatigable in his researches, for his works were of the most laborious kind. But what enabled him, besides his unwearied diligence, to bring them to perfection was, his being blessed with a most excellent memory. He had laid so good a foundation of learning that, though he had chiefly conversed with records and other matters of antiquity, which are not apt to form a polite style, yet he expressed himself in all his compositions in an easy and genteel manner. He was, indeed, one of the first who placed our ecclesiastical history and antiquities upon a firm basis, by grounding them upon records and registers, which, in the main, are unexceptionable authorities. During the course of his long life he had visited every cathedral in England and Wales, except Carlisle, which journeys he used to call his *pilgrimages*. In his friendships none more sincereand hearty, always communicative, and ever ready to assist every studious and inquisitive person. This occasioned an acquaintance and connection between him and all his learned contemporaries. For his

mother, the University of Oxford, he always expressed the most awful respect and the warmest esteem. As to his piety and moral qualifications he was strictly religious, without any mixture of superstition or enthusiasm, and quite exemplary in this respect; and of this, his many public works in building, repairing, and beautifying churches, are so many standing witnesses. He was charitable to the poor and needy, just and upright towards all men. With regard to himself, he was remarkably sober and temperate, and often said that he denied himself many things that he might employ them better. And, indeed, he appeared to have had no greater value for money than as it furnished him with opportunities for doing good.—From Nichol, "Anecdotes of Bowyer," p. 148.

Browne Willis's great attachment to Bishop Benson has been mentioned by Miss Talbot, in her lively style. The same may be deduced from their correspondence, and, it may be added, that it was mutual. The following inscription, inserted in the first page of a very handsome Vulgate Bible, which had been the property of their common ancestor Bishop Fell, presented by Mr. Willis to Bishop Benson, will prove a testimony to the existence and warmth of their friendship, equally honourable to each party :—

Reverendo admodum in Christo Patri
Martin Benson, S.T.P.,
Glocestrensi Episcopo Vigilantissimo
Codicem hunc sacrum
E Bibliothecâ Johannis Fell *τοῦ μακαρίτου*
Episcop. Oxon. Avunculi sui venerabilis
nec minus sanctimoniâ quam sanguine et personæ
similitudine affinis,
Selectum D. D. D. Browne Willis
Gratitudinis æternæ
Ob innumera et perpetua in se suosque
Beneficia quotidie collata
leve pignus.

About the close of the year 1727, the rectory of Bletchley became vacant, Mr. Willis being the patron. Feeling the great advantages he would thereby confer on the parishioners of Bletchley, and with a full sense of his important obligation as lay patron, Mr. Willis urged Mr. Benson to accept of the vacant benefice. The living was considerable in value, but an increase of income was now of no consideration to him, and if preferment of that description had entered into his wishes, his situation in the Church of Durham gave him the prospect of its speedy attainment, without the interruption to his social plans which this distant residence threatened. Mr. Benson was, however, prevailed upon to accept it. This was

the first and only parochial preferment he ever enjoyed, and during the seven years he held it he proved himself an active, faithful, and conscientious parish priest.

The parish of Bletchley, of which Mr. Benson thus became the rector, was of considerable extent and population, comprising, besides the village of that name, the hamlet of Water Eaton, and a part of the small decayed town of Fenny Stratford. This preferment therefore afforded sufficient scope for the exertion of his active and benevolent spirit; he was also fortunate in having a patron who fully concurred with him in all his views for the discharge of his parochial duties; and who possessed not only the inclination, but the means, of yielding effectual assistance in his plans of improvement. A favourable instance of Mr. Willis's active inclination in this cause may be exemplified in the circumstances of the parish at the time when Mr. Benson became the rector of it. At Fenny Stratford, which is situated at some distance from the parish church, and on a much frequented public road, there had formerly been a chapel-of-ease, for the accommodation of the inhabitants. This had fallen into a state of dilapidation since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and, consequently, the inhabitants of that part of the parish might be said to be destitute of any place for divine worship.

Mr. Willis projected the rebuilding of it, and accordingly procured subscriptions in the neighbourhood in aid of his own larger contributions, and had been enabled in the year 1724 to lay the first stone of the new chapel. Matters were in this state when Mr. Benson was inducted to the living, and somewhat more than two years after (viz., May 27, 1730), the chapel was consecrated, and thenceforward appropriated to the celebration of divine service; and *that posterity might continue in the full enjoyment of this advantage, the Rector and another person contributed to its endowment by a donation of* £100 *each, whereby they were further enabled to procure the Queen Anne's bounty, which constituted it a perpetual curacy and a chapel-of-ease to the mother church of Bletchley.*

There are some circumstances connected with this restoration, which, as they tend to illustrate the singular character of Mr. Willis, may be interesting to mention. The chapel was dedicated by him to St. Martin, and the

first stone of it was laid on St. Martin's Day, because his grandfather died on St. Martin's Day, in St. Martin's Lane. And when the chapel was finished, he caused an engraved portrait of his grandfather to be hung up at the entrance, with the following lines:—

"In honour of thy memory, blessed shade,
Was the foundation of this chapel laid.
Purchased by thee, thy son and present heir
Owe these their manors to thy art and care.
For this, may all thy race thanks ever pay,
And yearly celebrate St. Martin's Day."

In the same spirit, whimsical certainly, but not illaudable, he beautified and repaired the parish church of Bletchley, at an expense of £1346, to which he was induced, as he says, by the circumstance of his father and mother having been there interred, esteeming it a greater act of piety, and as great a respect to their memory, as if he had erected costly monuments over their remains.

Having thus, in conjunction with his friend and patron, accomplished this important improvement in the circumstances of his parish, Mr. Benson made it the place of his principal residence, and personally superintended whatsoever might tend to its interest and advantage. He was fortunate also in meeting with parishioners who were competent to appreciate the value of such a minister, and with their ready concurrence he was enabled to discharge every part of his duty to their profit and his own satisfaction.

A short time previous to his taking the living of Bletchley, he had been appointed one of the Queen's chaplains, and being in the year 1728 in his Majesty's suite on the royal visit to the University of Cambridge, amidst the profusion of degrees which were conferred on that occasion, he was created D.D. In 1730, he had the misfortune to lose his friend and patron, Bishop Talbot. But within a year of the bishop's death, his eldest son became Lord Chancellor, and on his advancement to the Seals he immediately showed the same kind attention to the clerical friends of his deceased brother as his father had done, and one of his first acts was to call Mr. Butler from his retirement at Stanhope to be his domestic chaplain, shortly after which he was promoted to a stall in Rochester. In 1733, Mr. Secker was promoted to the

rectory of St. James's Piccadilly, and within a year after he was advanced further to the see of Bristol.

Benson's time for episcopal promotion now came, though it would appear from one of his letters to Browne Willis that the offer of preferment was at first declined. Writing to him, he says:—

"I shall strangely surprise you, though not so much as myself was surprised with the news, when I acquaint you that I am, after all, to be a Bishop. My brother Secker and I were but on Tuesday morning with Sir R. Walpole, to return our thanks, the one for being, the other for *not* being, a Bishop, and he repeated to me the promise he had in a letter before sent me an account of, that his Majesty would give me the first Deanery I desired. Before three o'clock that afternoon I was sent for and acquainted that Dr. Mawson had desired to be excused taking the Bishopric; that I was nominated to the Bishopric of Gloucester; and the person who delivered me the message said he had engaged I should accept it, which, accordingly, I have since done. I shall only say, that as this has in so extraordinary—and, I trust, providential—a manner come to me, I trust the same good Providence will enable me to do the duty of it. I know my own inability, and the only thing I can say of myself is, that I have a heart sincerely and zealously disposed to do all the good in the station which I may be capable of doing."

He was thus appointed to the bishopric of Gloucester, and on the 19th of January, 1735, was consecrated in Lambeth Chapel, together with his brother-in-law, Dr. Secker, to the see of Bristol, and Dr. Fleming to that of Carlisle.

Bishop Benson now resigned his archdeaconry of Berkshire, and his rectory of Bletchley, though he still retained his prebendal stall in Durham. About this time another ecclesiastical promotion took place which it is as well to mention in this memoir.

It has been remarked, that in Italy Dr. Benson commenced an acquaintance with Mr. Berkely. Between him and Bishop Secker and Benson there had grown up the warmest friendship. He, like the rest, had been promoted; first to the deanery of Clogher, and then of Derry, and then to the bishopric of Cloyne in the year 1734.

Thus did the stream of good fortune, which brought success to the immediate subject of our enquiry, extend its favourable tide to those whom he most loved. Having been, rather against his inclination, confirmed in his bishopric, Benson determined to do his utmost in this his more enlarged sphere of work. It was his endeavour to look into all the minutest parts and concerns of the

diocese, and to enable him to do this he laboured to become acquainted with the manners, habits, and pursuits of his clergy, and gave them every facility for cultivating an acquaintance and friendship with him. He had one day every week on which his table was open to such clergy and laity as would accept of his hospitality. Yet this periodical exercise of hospitality was considered rather as a conscientious discharge of a necessary duty than as any personal gratification to himself. Inveterate headache, and a constitutional depression of spirits, rendered him but little calculated for exertion of this kind, whilst the strict regimen he was obliged to observe was far from congenial with the exercise of hospitality. His diocese was his first and prominent care. He was not at all a political partisan; but in his character of a Lord of Parliament, he endeavoured always to blend that of a Christian bishop, and the presence which the one did not exact he devoted faithfully to the other. He accordingly did not deem it necessary to attend in Parliament, except when questions arose affecting the Church, or which involved the well-being of the State. His residence in London was limited to the discharge of his duty, and he had no family to tempt him to trespass on his attention to his diocese. It was at all times a great pleasure to him to see the honourable success of his friends; and two promotions, which took place in 1737-1738, gave him much satisfaction. In the spring of the former year, his brother-in-law, Dr. Secker, was removed to the see of Oxford, and in the following year Dr. Butler was promoted to the see of Bristol.

It was thus amidst his episcopal, social, and domestic duties, that he passed several years to his own satisfaction and the benefit of others. The eventful year of 1745 brought him again on a more public stage of action, and the obligations of the times he discharged in a manner worthy of himself. It happened at this period that the bishop was not in his diocese, but in a place of much greater danger—in *Durham*—where his active spirit was eventually of great service to the public. His own detail of these circumstances, in a letter to his friend Bishop Berkely, is as follows, and as an original document of the history of the time it is not uninteresting:—

"My Dear Lord,—Your letter found me not at Gloucester, but at this place, whither I came the beginning of the last month to keep my residence, and whence it would be thought a shame to stir while it continues in the danger in which it has some time been. We have for our defence entered into an association, and, in consequence of it, a regiment of horse is to be raised, and money subscribed for maintaining it. It was very providential that the rebels, after the defeat of Sir John Cope, did not immediately march this way. If they had, they might not only have come without opposition thus far, but as much farther as to London itself. In conjunction with five of the principal gentlemen of this county, I took the liberty of making a representation where the most effectual stand might be made in these parts, and what was the likeliest method of doing it. And I had the honour of receiving from the Duke of Newcastle two expresses, acquainting me that we had the good fortune to have his Majesty's sentiments entirely agreeing with ours, and after the representation was, by his order, considered in council, it was agreed that Newcastle, and not Berwick, was the place of making a stand, and that the force which could be collected should be drawn thither. And an order, in consequence of this, was sent to Berwick, to require that the Dutch regiment which had landed there should immediately march to Newcastle. . . . . I was going to say something of my own health, but really while the *salus publica* is in this danger, I think much less than I used to do about it. We are entering into an association, and raising troops in Gloucestershire, as we have done here, and when I leave this place I hope to get back thither again. There will be enough without me in Parliament till after Christmas. It is a pleasure in the midst of our distress to see that all in this kingdom are united in loyalty. But, then, there is much too great a union also in vice and irreligion. And what great good can we expect from the former while the latter is the case? I was in great hopes that much good would arise out of the present evil, by awakening and amending us; but I do not see that either prosperity or adversity is likely to do this. And if so, our ruin will only be adjourned, and not removed, if we get out of the present danger. I have just room to wish the complete recovery of your son, and am yours, most faithfully,

"M. GLOUCESTER."

There is another point which ought to be mentioned in this memoir, and that is, Bishop Benson's ordination of George Whitefield. He, as a boy, received the early part of his education in the college school of Gloucester, and, being a boy of some promise, when in his eighteenth year was sent to Pembroke College, Oxford. There he became acquainted with the Wesleys, and joined their society, and in returning to his own city he laboured with much zeal and earnestness, endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, and to arouse the careless and indifferent. His rising fame reached the ear of the bishop, who admired his zeal, applauded his courage, and having ascertained the purity of his life, he conceived that in those days of religious languor and indifference, a minister of this cast would prove an acquisition to the Established Church.

He, accordingly, sent for him, and having found that although fully qualified for the first orders of the ministry he was yet only in his twenty-second year, informed him that he would depart from his custom, and admit him to deacon's orders whenever he applied. After a short deliberation, Mr. Whitefield availed himself of the offer, and on the 26th day of June, 1736, he was ordained deacon, and in 1738 was admitted to priest's orders. Though, as time went on, the results were not in accordance with the bishop's wishes, yet his intention had been for the good of the Church and the benefit of souls. The state of the Church at that period was such as to require the most able, zealous, and active ministry, and any injury which has in this case accrued to the Church, must be ascribed to its own act in silencing, rather than using, the instruments which were at hand to rouse its sleeping energies. It is a curious coincidence, that Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, who afterwards became one of Whitefield's great supporters, was the widow of the bishop's old pupil, the Earl of Huntingdon. Some time after the death of the Earl she became acquainted with Whitefield, and continued his uniform patroness and supporter. Her sister-in-law had married Wesley's old pupil and fellow-missionary, Ingham, and she, it would appear, communicated her opinions to the Countess. The Wesleys were called in to her after a dangerous illness, and the bishop, her husband's tutor, was afterwards sent for, in hopes that he might restore her to a sounder state of devotion. But all his arguments were ineffectual. Instead of receiving instruction from him, she was disposed to be teacher, quoted the homilies against him, insisted upon her own interpretation of the articles, and attacked him on the awful responsibility of his station. All this is said to have irritated him. The emotion, which he must needs have felt, might have been more truly, as well as more charitably, interpreted; and when he left her, he lamented that he had ever laid his hands on George Whitefield. "My lord," she replied, "mark my words: when you come upon your dying-bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complacence" (Southey's "Life of Wesley").

In the year 1752, the bishop lost his old friend—Bishop Butler. It seems that towards the close of the

month of May, Bishop Benson was engaged in a visitation and confirmation tour through his diocese. This engagement carrying him into the neighbourhood of Bath, he determined to see the state of his friend, then dangerously ill, and take, it might be, a last farewell of him for this world. The bishop was in a dying state; but though his bodily powers were rapidly failing, his mind was still vigorous. The meeting was melancholy but gratifying to both, and they took an affectionate leave of each other for this world, with the assured hope of meeting again in a better. Bishop Benson's own health was now rapidly failing; anxiety, fatigue, the extreme heat of the weather, and the additional unfortunate circumstance of getting very wet in the course of his journey (for, on this occasion, as usual, he travelled on horseback), brought him to a state extremely alarming to his friends. He was, however, enabled to reach Gloucester, where he heard of the death of his friend, Butler. The cold he had taken brought on inflammation of the bowels, and after a long and agonizing illness, which terminated in mortification, he breathed his last on August 30th, 1752. He was buried on September 4th, in the Cathedral of Gloucester, and a plain stone marks the spot with the concise inscription, "Martinus Episcopus."

Bishop Benson's literary character is rather to be inferred from general circumstances than to be considered as established on any existing basis. The situation he maintained in his college, and the selection of him as the instructor and travelling companion to pupils of rank, are sufficient presumptions of his early attainments and scholarship; whilst the eminent persons with whom he principally associated in his latter days, seem to be sufficient vouchers to the estimation in which he was held by these companions of his leisure hours. Indeed, the common report of his knowledge and attainments fully corroborate these inferences, and the very few publications of his, limited to a few occasional sermons, are creditable specimens of his talents, and leave us to regret that more have not been handed down. Classic authors were to his latest day his favourite recreation. His professional reading seems to have been extensive, and always accompanied by a criticising and investigating spirit. In a word—his opinions were sought after, his sentiments were

listened to with deference; and although he has not left behind him any considerable literary treasures, yet he may safely be classed among the learned prelates of his day.

"Ev'n in a bishop I can spy desert:
Secker is decent, Rundle has a heart;
Manners with candour are to Benson given,
To Berkely every virtue under heaven."

POPE'S *Dialogues*, II., 70.