

# The Western Churchman

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

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## EDITORIAL.

### THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

The death of the Archbishop of Canterbury is a great personal loss to the whole of the English church. By the width of his sympathies by his goodness and impartiality, by his rare tact and profound learning, he added to his exalted office an influence which was felt and respected throughout the church. It is no exaggeration to say that among the English bishops he was unique in the possession of qualities which go to the making of a great archbishop. And the loss to the Anglican church throughout the world seems at the moment irreparable. The circumstances of his death, so sudden and so beautiful, illustrate the wideness of his sympathies. The primate of England had just made a first visit to Ireland, the guests of the archbishop of Dublin, to attend the opening of the newly restored cathedral of Kildare. It was a brotherly and gracious act that has been and will be

deeply appreciated. On his return he was staying with his old friend, the veteran statesman by whom he was nominated fourteen years ago for his high office. The Queen's high estimation of the archbishop was testified by her telegram of sympathy to Mrs. Benson, in which she speaks in touching words of "the dear, kind, excellent archbishop, of whom she was so fond." At such a moment it is the sense of personal loss that fills the heart of the aged Queen, who is, we remember, nearly ten years senior to the late archbishop. And may we not say that the death itself was a witness to the holiness and humility of his life. His reception of the holy communion at the early service, and then the humble kneeling with his old friend's son pronounced the absolution which was the signal for his departure. "That the rest of our life, hereafter, may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy."

In speaking of the late archbishop's many great qualities, we think we may fairly put in the first place his great learning. He was emphatically a scholarly archbishop, and particularly in studies bearing upon sacred things, the holy scriptures and the history of the church. Next his learning was so woven into his life that it only ministered to his practical wisdom and great breadth of view. His original works are not numerous, yet those who have read them feel at once the solidity of his knowledge and the exhaustiveness of his reading. There is an article on "St. Cyprian" in the dictionary of Christian biography which is a masterpiece of character writing, and an essay on "The place of the cathedral chapter in the work of a diocese" written when he was chancellor of Lincoln, which of itself, is sufficient to justify the wisdom of his election to a bishopric. It simply exhausts the whole history and literature of the subject from the primitive ages to the present day. In his later days, filled with the arduous work of Truro and Canterbury, he had no leisure for separate writing, but the charges issued from time to time were always valuable, and the marvellous store of learning displayed in his judgment in the trial of Bishop of Lincoln, has, without exaggeration, laid the church under a vast obligation. It was said, in that case, that Sir Horace Davey, counsel for the prosecution, knew nothing about the case, Sir Walter Phillimore for the Bishop of Lincoln, knew

something about it, Mr. Jeune, his junior, knew more about it, and the archbishop simply knew everything.

One would like to say something of the personal life of the archbishop, in which doubtless we are to find the secret of much of his great power and influence. Whilst in no way an ascetic, he was yet a man of deeply spiritual mind and religious habits. He was an early riser, leaving his bed regularly, even in the depth of winter, at half past six, and spent three quarters of an hour at his private devotions. It was this looking in the face of God day by day that gave him the wonderful sweetness and influence which every one felt who came in personal contact with him. His manner in social intercourse was always friendly and sunny, making all the more impressive those serious moments when he would bring his hearers face to face with the eternal verities.

Yet the greatness of the archbishop as a churchman is no doubt to be found in his statesmanship. How wise a ruler he has proved to the church will be for those to estimate who come after us. The great work of his archepiscopate has been undoubtedly the delivery of the Lincoln judgment, which from every point of view, was a noble achievement. What terrible ruin and wreckage a weak archbishop at such a time might have brought upon the church, it is impossible to say. But Archbishop Benson rose master of the situation. His unfolding of the difficult has been accepted as decisive, not merely by the whole church, and by every party in the church, but also in every particular by the Queen's Privy Council, which simply contented itself with saying that the archbishop's judgment left nothing more to say. When we regard the peace of the church to-day, its strength, and vital growth, we do not always realize the debt due to the wise archbishop who has guided and inspired the church's councils and missionary progress. And in all this we do not think Archbishop Benson has been the archbishop of a party, but the archbishop of the whole church. He was not a low churchman, certainly, as the phrase goes, nor was he in any party sense a high churchman; he was rather, in the word which he himself commended, a "deep churchman"; a true churchman with sympathies with all that was good and true, but loyal to the core to the history and principles of the church of England,