

CHAPTER II.

Of his Grandfather, Dr. Annesley.

SAMUEL ANNESLEY, LL. D., grandfather of the late Mr. Wesley by the mother's side, was born of religious parents at Killingworth near Warwick, in the year 1620, and was their only child. It has been said, that he was first cousin to the Earl of Anglesey. His grandmother, an eminently pious woman, dying before his birth, desired the child, if a boy, might be called Samuel; assigning as the reason of her request, "*I can say I have asked him of the Lord.*" In his infancy he was strongly impressed with the thoughts of being a minister, for which indeed his parents intended him from his birth; and such was the ardor of his mind in pursuing his design, that when about five or six years old, he began a practice, which he afterwards continued, of reading twenty chapters every day in the Bible. The continuance of this practice laid an excellent foundation of useful knowledge, for the future exercise of his ministry. He who studies the Scriptures well, and believes them to be, not merely a sufficient, but the *only* safe rule of faith and practice, will generally exhibit a more uniform character as a minister of the gospel, than he who takes his religious opinions from the subtle reasonings and systems of men. This observation was admirably illustrated and confirmed by the steady, uniform conduct of Dr. Annesley, through some of the most trying situations in which his principles were put to the test.

He lost his father when four years old; but his pious mother took great care of his education; nor did he want the means of obtaining the best instruction, as the paternal estate was considerable. Though a child when he first formed his resolution concerning the ministry, yet he never varied from his purpose: nor was he discouraged by an affecting dream, in which he thought that he was a minister, and sent for by the Bishop of London, to be burnt as a martyr. At the age of fifteen he went to the university of Oxford, and took his degrees in

the usual course. His piety and diligence at Oxford, were so much out of the common way of the place, that he attracted considerable notice. In 1644 he was ordained as chaplain in the ship called the *Globe*, under the Earl of Warwick, then Lord High Admiral of England. He went to sea with the fleet, and kept a diary of their voyage. But having no great liking to a sea-faring life, he soon quitted it, and settled at Cliff in Kent, where at first he met with a storm more violent than any he had experienced at sea. The minister of this place had been turned out for his barefaced encouragement of licentiousness, as Dr. Williams reports, by attending the meetings of the people for dancing, drinking, and merriment on the Lord's day. The people on this account were exceedingly fond of him, and greatly prejudiced against his successor, Dr. Annesley, who was a man of a very different character. When he first went among them, they rose upon him with spits, forks, and stones, threatening to destroy him. This was no small trial to a young man of about twenty-five years of age. But he remained firm as a rock in his Master's cause, and as the people were not hardened against the evidence of gospel truth, he had some hopes of doing them good, notwithstanding their profaneness and violence. He therefore told them, that, "Let them use him as they would, he was resolved to continue with them, till God had prepared them by his ministry to entertain a better, who should succeed him : but solemnly declared, that when they became so prepared, he would leave the place." His labors were incessant, and the success of his preaching and engaging behavior was surprising ; so that in a few years the people were greatly reformed, and became exceedingly fond of him. Though he enjoyed here an income of four hundred pounds per annum, yet he paid so conscientious a regard to his first declaration, that he thought himself bound to leave them ; which he accordingly did, and the people, who at his coming threatened to stone him, now parted with him with cries and tears, testifying their affection for him.

A very signal providence directed him to a settlement in London in 1652, by the unanimous choice of the inhabitants of the parish of St. John the Apostle. Soon after he was made lecturer of St. Paul's, and in 1658 Cripplegate was made happy by his settlement there.

He was a man of great uprightness, never regulating his religious profession by his secular interests. He was turned out of his lecture because he would not comply with some things which he deemed extravagant and wrong ; he thought conformity in him would be a sin, and he chose to quit a full maintenance rather than injure his conscience. He was acknowledged by all parties to be an Israelite indeed, and yet he suffered much for Nonconformity ; but such was the spirit of party, that an angel from heaven would have been persecuted and abused, if he had been a Dissenter. In his sufferings God often appeared remarkably for him ; one person died while

signing a warrant to apprehend him. He afterwards suffered, because he thought it his duty to bear witness for the old truth against Antinomianism. His integrity made him a stranger to all tricks or little artifices to serve his temporal interest; and his charitable and unsuspecting temper, sometimes gave those who practised them, an opportunity to impose upon him.

In ministerial labors he was abundant. Before he was silenced, he often preached three times a day; during the troubles almost every day; afterwards twice every Lord's day. His sermons were not raw and uninteresting, but instructive and affecting: and his manner of delivery very peculiarly expressed his heartiness in the things he spoke.

His care and labor extended to every place where he might be useful. In some measure the care of all the churches was upon him. When any place wanted a minister, he used his endeavors to procure one for them; when any minister was oppressed by poverty, he soon employed himself for his relief. "O! how many places, says Dr. Williams, had sat in darkness, how many ministers had been starved, if Dr. Annesley had died thirty years since!" He was the chief, often the sole instrument in the education as well as the subsistence of several ministers. The sick, the widows, the orphans, whom he relieved were innumerable. As a minister, his usefulness was extensive, and God kept him faithful in his work to the last, for which he thus thanked God on his death-bed: "Blessed be God, I can say, I have been faithful in the ministry above fifty-five years." Many called him father, as the instrument of their conversion; and many called him a comforter.

He had uninterrupted peace, and assurance of God's love and favor, for above thirty years of the latter part of his life. This assurance had not one cloud in all his last sickness. A little before his departure, his desire of death appeared strong, and his soul was filled with the foretaste of glory. He often said, "Come my dearest Jesus, the nearer the more precious, the more welcome." Another time his joy was so great, that in ecstasy he cried out, "I cannot contain it: what manner of love is this to a poor worm? I cannot express the thousandth part of what praise is due to Thee! We know not what we do when we offer at praising God for his mercies. It is but little I can give thee, but, Lord help me to give thee my all. I will die praising thee, and rejoice that others can praise thee better. I shall be satisfied with thy likeness; satisfied! satisfied! Oh! my dearest Jesus, I come!" Thus died this excellent man, December 31, 1696, in the 77th year of his age, and left us an example how to live and how to die.

Dr. Annesley had naturally a strong, robust constitution, which enabled him to undergo great labor and fatigue. He was seldom sick, and could endure the coldest weather without hat, gloves, or

fire. For many years he scarcely ever drank anything but water, and even to his last sickness, his sight continued so strong, that he could read the smallest print without spectacles. His piety, diligence, and zeal, made him highly esteemed by the Dissenters. He assisted at the first public ordination they had, after the act of uniformity, when Dr. Calamy and six others were ordained in the Dissenting place of worship in Little St. Hellen's, in 1694.*