

**WILLIAM STUBBS, BISHOP
OF OXFORD, 1825-1901
(FROM THE LETTERS OF
WILLIAM STUBBS)**

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William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford, 1825-1901 (from the Letters of William Stubbs) by William Holden Hutton

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BISHOP OF OXFORD

1825-1901

(From the *Letters of William Stubbs*)

BY

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PREFACE.

IT was felt that later times might well have cause to complain if they should be able to learn as little about the life of the great English historian of the Nineteenth Century as we know of Bishop Butler. It was thought that the letters of Bishop Stubbs, and the letters to him, that have been preserved, would do something to show what he was and what part he played in the literary and ecclesiastical history of his day. I was asked to collect them and to add such an account of his life as should make them intelligible to those who did not know him. Such was the origin of this book in its first form.

Such work as I have had to do involves thanks at every stage of it. If I were to say now to whom I am grateful I should but give a list of all those to whom I owe letters, or reminiscences, or advice. I ask them all again to accept my sincere thanks for their kindness and help. Without the confidence of Mrs. Stubbs and the Bishop's children I should not have been able to undertake the work: without the assistance of Miss Hunter and Mr. Capes and his family I should not have been able to recover the facts of the Bishop's early life. To the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Oxford, the Dean of Chester, and Canon E. F. Holmes I have owed very much. But throughout I owe thanks to many who have helped me at every stage, and to those, and most of all to the representatives of the Bishop's oldest friends, who placed their letters in my hands, to the late Mrs. Freeman and to Mrs. J. R. Green, and happily to one survivor of the historic Oxford friendships, Mr. Bryce, who expressed the greatest interest in the work during its progress, and by the reminiscences he contributed has given it most valuable assistance, and whose commendation has been most generously given to the completed book.

No one, however, of all those who have helped me, must be considered in any way responsible for any

PREFACE

discretion, or indiscretion, I may have shown. The assistance of the Bishop's friends was everywhere generously given; but the faults of the book were all my own. I undertook the task with very great hesitation and prosecuted it with trepidation and uncertainty as to the result. I think I may say that the only thing which induced me to persevere in it was the desire to present as he really was a great and good man whom I deeply admired and loved. It has, therefore, been a great relief to me that the Bishop's oldest friends, and those who knew him best, have most cordially approved of the book—much more cordially than I could approve myself. I was obliged at times to go against the advice of those for whom I have the highest respect, in regard to what should be said; but I could only do what mature consideration convinced me was right. It was therefore the greatest satisfaction to me, to be told by one who knew him better perhaps than any living man—"I believe that all you say of the Bishop is the plain unvarnished truth, and you have understood and expressed his character in a way that his greatest intimates could defend and approve." That is all I wished to do, and I am very thankful if I may feel—as the kind testimony of some of the Bishop's brethren of the Episcopate as well as of those nearest to him induces me to believe—that I have succeeded.

It is therefore with more confidence that, in response to a request which has reached me from many quarters, I have prepared this abridged edition of the book which was originally published in 1904. I have been obliged, in view of the form the book is now to take, to omit many of the letters. I have taken the opportunity to rectify some errors and to insert some new information. This is the last tribute I can pay to the memory of the great historian and good man from whom it is the high privilege of my life to have learned.

W. H. HUTTON.

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,
OXFORD,
May 9, 1906.

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I

Youth

WHEN the history of the intellectual movements of the Victorian Age in England comes to be written, one name will stand out in the science to which it belongs as the name of Butler stands out in the religious philosophy of an earlier day. A great school arose in the middle of the nineteenth century which embodied and expressed the enthusiasm of the time for an ordered study of the past. Of the workers in that school, the greatest was William Stubbs, and his fame, if it be possible for the generation which knew him to predict it, should be beside that of Gibbon as the greatest historian of his country and his age. But he was much more than a historian. If in the field of history the most enduring part of his work was done, the Church of England will not cease to remember him as a faithful ruler and a servant of the servants of God. On all his life was set the mark of steady, unselfish service. He was a strenuous worker from his earliest years, and he worked to the end.

William Stubbs was born on June 21, 1825. He was the eldest child of William Morley Stubbs, a solicitor practising at Knaresborough, whose descent could be traced back to the middle of the fourteenth century. The family was of the old yeoman stock, which was the silent strength of England in the Middle Ages. None of the members of it rose to fame, but all held a good position among the folk of the royal forest of Knaresborough. William Stubbs, of the township of Clint, is set down in the subsidy roll of 1377. His son John had property at Birstwith, and was a reeve of the forest.