

**BISHOP
WILBERFORCE**

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Bishop Wilberforce by G. W. Daniell

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G. W. DANIELL

**BISHOP
WILBERFORCE**



SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.
(From a Portrait by G. RICHMOND, R.A.)

BISHOP WILBERFORCE

BY

G. W. DANIELL, M.A.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER	1
II. EARLY YEARS AND TRAINING	9
III. ARCHDEACON, DEAN, BISHOP	20
IV. ORGANIZING A DIOCESE	38
V. DIOCESAN DIFFICULTIES	71
VI. THE REVIVAL OF CONVOCATION	109
VII. THE BISHOP AND THE BROAD CHURCH PARTY	141
VIII. RITUALISM AND CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT ...	168
IX. BISHOP WILBERFORCE'S LITERARY INFLUENCE AND PERSONALITY	196

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BISHOP WILBERFORCE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

DEAN BURGON, in his work entitled *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, describes and speaks of Samuel Wilberforce as the remodeller of the episcopate. It will be the aim of these pages to endeavour to present his life, work, character, and influence mainly from the point of view thus suggested. We owe a great debt of gratitude to those who will give us right and high ideas of the duties and possibilities that any important rank or position involves. The debt is increased when the true ideal, though once grasped and understood, has been lost, lowered, and obscured by the heavy pressure of unfavourable conditions, acting unrelieved over a long period. Since the Reformation, and more still since the Revolution, conditions of appointment, and the common opinion, had led men too little to seek the office of a bishop in the Church of England as "a good work." It was too much the reward of political service, valued for its secular rather than its spiritual opportunities, favouring an attractive combination of

dignity and ease. A great apathy fell on the Church in England, partially deprived, under the circumstances just characterized, of her proper leaders. In a critical moment of awakening, the subject of this memoir will be seen, as Bishop of Oxford, to have been largely instrumental in putting a new life into the order to which he belonged. There was a truth in words written of him by his colleague, the Bishop of Rochester, towards the close of his life—"You have introduced such a system into the episcopate that one has time for nothing."¹

Nothing strikes us more than the immense variety of talent and power that was displayed by Bishop Wilberforce in his life and work. Take in hand what he would, he might be relied on to face the public with success, and carry through his undertaking without the heavy disability that is incurred, especially in introducing apparent novelties, by seeming to fail. Other men, from timidity, or want of confidence in themselves or their calling, had hesitated to attempt all that their office and position really required them to do. It is not difficult to copy, or even to make improvements on, that which has once been done; and if it is, as Bishop Wilberforce's biographer says, "that his idea of true episcopacy is now a familiar one, and to those of a younger generation a matter of course,"² it is largely because his gifts enabled him to give a practical illustration of the way in which its many and various requirements might be met. There were few parts of the work that belongs to the episcopal office, on which he did not fearlessly and boldly embark, considering its

¹ *Life*, iii. p. 375.

² *Ibid.* i. p. 344.