

REPRESENTATIVE CHURCHMEN.

II.—THE BISHOP OF CHICHESTER.



CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL.

THE RIGHT REV. ERNEST ROLAND WILBERFORCE, D. D., Lord Bishop of Chichester, is a son of the late Samuel Wilberforce, successively Bishop of Oxford and Winchester. His mother was Emily, daughter and heiress of the late Rev. John Sargent, of Lavington House, Petworth.

He was born at Brighstone, Isle of Wight, on January 22nd, 1840, and educated at Harrow, proceeding to Exeter College, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1864, M.A. in 1867, and received the D.D. degree in 1882, in which year he was also made an Hon. D.D. of the University of Durham.

He was ordained in 1864 to the Curacy of Cuddeston, and became Chaplain to his father; in 1866 he was Curate of Lea, Lincolnshire, which he resigned to become Rector of Middleton Stony. He was appointed Vicar of Seaforth, near Liverpool, by Mr. Gladstone in 1873, where he worked with great zeal for five years. In 1878 he became a Canon of Winchester and Warden of the Wilberforce Missionary College in the same city. He was Sub-Almoner to Queen Victoria from 1871 until 1882.

Upon the formation of the Diocese of Newcastle, Dr. Wilberforce was appointed the first Bishop, and was consecrated in Durham Cathedral on July 25th, 1882, when his brother, Archdeacon Wilberforce, the present Chaplain to the Speaker, preached the sermon.

With regard to Bishop Wilberforce's work in the North, a clergyman benefited in Newcastle Diocese sends us the following particulars:—

"For a long time Bishop Wilberforce had a difficult position to fill. He was asked to follow Bishop Lightfoot and to work amongst many who still looked in feeling to Durham. Then a certain air of reserve in his official character was not at first understood by Northumbrians, who are nothing if not suspicious

of new-comers; but, at any rate, very soon the better class of laymen came around him, and the Commission which revealed the sadly spiritual destitution of a great area like Tyneside not only led to a remarkable wave of church-building and the appointment of extra clergy, but made the clergy and laity alike in touch with his splendid initiative and earnestness.

"He discovered Newcastle Diocese as difficult to bring into 'line' as it is hard to manage geographically; but, as Sir B. C. Browne has lately said, 'Bishop Wilberforce found the clergy an undisciplined rabble; he left them an orderly regiment.' To bring this about he started what is now common to all parts, a Diocesan Society, and insisted, through good and evil report, on the Diocese being the unit for which each parish should work.

"Under his episcopate the old parish church of St. Nicholas was made into a cathedral, several new rural deaneries were formed, the clergy were got together in periodical conferences, while the laity found the son of the great Bishop of Oxford interesting them in such good works as Homes of Mercy, C.E.T.S., and many agencies for Church effort.

"Bishop Wilberforce, in the midst of attending for thirteen years to all his vast correspondence unaided by any secretary, found occasion to be careful in regular centres of Confirmation (a lesson his father had taught him), and always himself to publicly institute, with few exceptions, a new priest to his cure of souls.

"Some of his own appointments became distinct successes; amongst which we may name the present Bishop of Thetford as Vicar of Newcastle, with Canon Gough as successor, and the late Bishop of London, Dr. Creighton, as his chaplain; but in several instances his judgment was not so much at fault as that it has since happened the object of his choice has not always risen to the occasion. To those who knew him and his wife in private life, his departure to Chichester was a great loss, while his unrecorded ministrations to many a poor sick clergyman in time of need will be remembered by many with gratitude when the outer world is thinking only of his more public life, and judging him by that alone."

In 1895, upon the death of Bishop Durnford, Dr. Wilberforce was translated to the See of Chichester. He has for many years taken an active part in the work of the Church of England Temperance Society, and was elected President a few years ago in succession to the Archbishop of Canterbury.