

THE WORK OF A GREAT PRELATE^a.

IN the History of the Church, as well as in profane History, there have always been those whose names and labours have stood out markedly as benefactors of their race and time. A crowd of heroes in the records of Greece and Rome will occur to many of us at once. And when, by its own inherent weakness, dissolution overtook that vast empire which had Rome for its heart and seat of power, Christianity met the northern barbarian with such a message of charity as that he and his were won over to the Master, our Incarnate God, great names were in like manner heard in the new centres of life and power, those of prelates and pontiffs, kings, hermits, and virgins, and some of these on the bead-roll of the saints are profoundly venerated still.

Though it is not with the Church of God as it was with the elder dispensations—for the Church is not for one nation and time, but for all ages and for every race, and the Church, moreover, is divine—yet, on man's part, the old sins of indifference, unbelief, destruction of that which is good, and contempt for those who are set over us in the Lord, and the truths they teach, are as rife and rampant as ever. Never were these sins more marked or mischievous than during the religious changes of the sixteenth century. Patient investigators, laborious students, can no longer run in the muddy rut of traditional history, but come forth, with regret and sorrow it may be, but yet valiantly, and in defence of Truth, to tell how their prolonged and judicial investigations tend to reverse many one-sided judgments of old. In one word, a revolution has been effected as to the exact nature of the religious changes in question. Names that were formerly traduced, and characters which were always adroitly blackened, are now properly venerated, or, at least, held in well-deserved respect; while the Philosophy of History has helped to smooth the path of those noble and saintly men of later years, who, having so far reversed the dark deeds of destruction which were wrought out of yore, leaving a black legacy of evils for more than three long centuries, have now well-nigh completed a better and more glorious Reformation.

Practically and efficiently no one has done as much for this constructive work in our National Church, as the great prelate whose sad and sudden death we one and all so deeply and sincerely deplore. It needed master-minds to formulate anew the old and never-changing Catholic Truths of Pentecost, and forty years ago God gave them to the English Church in her long, cold day of barrenness and weakness, and in her dark hour of declining political strength. From the banks of the Isis the blast calling men to a spiritual warfare was clear and shrill. For once, in later years, the trumpet gave a certain sound; and men, independent of each other, but drawn

^a "From a Funeral Sermon on Samuel Wilberforce, the late Bishop of Winchester. By the Rev. Dr. Lee, Vicar of All Saints', Lambeth."