

THE LATE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

[KILLED BY A FALL FROM A HORSE, SATURDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 19, 1873.]

THE news of the sudden death of the Bishop of Winchester reached us only when it was too late to refer to it in our last number. It was a painful shock not only to Churchmen, but to all Englishmen; and it is not otherwise than interesting to observe the general expression of admiration, pronounced by public opinion not only in respect of his talents, but of his unceasing labours in his Master's cause.

The "Times," for instance, thus speaks of his work as a Bishop:—

"He really acted as the spiritual chief of his diocese, and did his utmost to awaken religious life in every corner of it. He was not content with acting as a mere overseer; he was its motive power; and the clergy learnt to look to him for constant encouragement and support. He was always ready to help them through a difficulty, and at the special services at certain seasons which have become cus-

tomary of late years, he was ever ready to take the lead. The one thing for which he had no toleration was indolence or indifference, and he always appreciated and honoured good work. The natural consequence was, that he obtained a hold over his clergy rarely gained by a Bishop; and when he left the diocese of Oxford, after administering it for a quarter of a century, it was thoroughly devoted to him."

The "Daily News," too, speaks in the same strain as regards his influence in his diocese:—

"Whenever the time comes for passing an impartial judgment upon the Episcopal career of Dr. Wilberforce, it will probably be found that his great work—that by which, more than any other, he imprinted his own character upon the Church of England—was the course of mingled teaching, example, and administration by which he

formed a body of clergy of a new type, who have well-nigh supplanted the Evangelical clergy, not only in the dioceses over which he presided, but throughout England. . . . It is enough now to recognise the fact that he was the completest Bishop England has seen in the present century."

And the "Morning Post" and "Daily Telegraph" both bear testimony to the high honour in which he was universally held:—

"The unlooked-for death of the Bishop of Winchester in the full swing of his active and brilliant life has been received everywhere with a shock and sense of loss seldom exceeded. He filled so large a space in the Church, in the State, and in society, that in losing him all classes feel that a great light has gone out. Of the many competitors for the honour and influence that belong to great public usefulness and high station, few have achieved a more splendid, and, we may add, a more real reputation than Samuel Wilberforce;

while in the smaller circle of private life none could be more admired and loved."

"We use no exaggerated language when we say that his death will cast a gloom over society, and be a theme of comment in every English household to-day; for he was incomparably the most prominent figure on the Episcopal bench. . . . Although not a theologian in the same sense as Dr. Pusey, he had a power of using what he knew such as no other English ecclesiastic could match."

And lastly, the "Standard" thus sums up his qualities:—

"Few men have been the mark of more abuse, and no man who has been such a mark has more completely outlived it. Through misrepresentation of the grossest kind the Bishop of Winchester steadily pursued the course which his conscience dictated to him. And in that ripe—old age we can hardly call it—let us say maturity, at which he had arrived, he was generally honoured and loved. The Church

of England loses the most eloquent of her preachers and one of the wisest of her counsellors; the House of Lords loses one of its illustrations, and the England of our day one of its glories. But the loss is ours, the gain is his. Death found Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, prepared to meet the Master in whose service he had throughout his life devoted his great powers."

We give a portrait of the Bishop, engraved some time since, when he occupied the See of Oxford; and we have already referred to the work of this great Prelate at considerable length on another page.