“We are apt to express wonder that so much exertion should be necessary to suppress such awful injustices. We ought, rather, to marvel that the short span of the life of one man, when well and wisely directed, is sufficient to remedy the miseries of millions for ages.”

—Sir James Mackintosh

“It was more than a great event in African or British history. It was one of the greatest events in the history of the world.”

—Reginald Coupland
“A Different Outcome”

Civil War
War Between the States
War of Northern Aggression

Whatever you call it,
Three quarters of a million Americans
Dead.

More than

World War I
World War II
The Korean War
Vietnam
Iraq
Afghanistan

Combined.

True—
Four million enslaved Africans

Freed

But the racial tension continues
Today

Festering
Boiling over
Weakening
Destroying

Where was America’s
William Wilberforce?
Chapter One

CHILDHOOD

“The Fourth Greatest Port in England”

London
Bristol
Liverpool
Hull

Hull:
Where the River Hull
Meets
The Humber Estuary

Hull:
Get your
Timber from Norway
Iron and tar from Sweden
Chocolates from Holland,
With tulips and port wine

Send away
From the Yorkshire dales
Wool
Ponies
Bolts of sailcloth

Here in the fourth greatest port in England
My family has been in the shipping industry
A hundred years and more.

Five years ago
My wife delivered a daughter.

One year ago
My wife delivered a daughter.

Today:
A son.

The family business will continue
After I am gone.

Though we Wilberforces have been rich in money,
Today we are no longer poor in progeny.

Welcome,
William!
“Let’s Not Be Extreme”
~*Mrs. Elizabeth Wilberforce*

Our family is religious
Enough.

We rent a pew.
Listen to the vicar
Speak his “thees” and “thous.”
Give to the poor and destitute.

Too much religion is the road to
Ruin.

I am careful to keep my little William
Protected.
“At Least I Speak Shakespeare”
~William Wilberforce

My schoolmasters,
Joseph and Isaac Milner,
Make even mathematics
Fun.

And they encourage me to
Keep a
Nature Journal,
Which I like.

But the best is when
They pick me up
And put me on the desktop
And ask me to read
Shakespeare.

I may be small for my age,
With poor eyesight.

But my voice . . .

It’s a gift.

I use it with gladness.
“Loss”  
~William Wilberforce

Sister Elizabeth was fourteen.  
And fourteen she will remain  
Until the resurrection of the dead.

When we first heard the news from the boarding house,  
Mother took to her bed.  
Father dashed off to London to escort the body Home.
“Come and Gone”  
~William Wilberforce

I had hoped for a new brother.  
Instead, a sister.  
Nine years younger.

My dad handed out

Bottles of Madeira  
To clerks in the counting house

Shillings  
To the household servants.

How happy he was.

Now, suddenly, he is gone.
“Empty”
~William Wilberforce

Elizabeth gone.
Father gone.

Mother alone upstairs,
Aloft and aloof.

A nurse cares for
Baby Anne.

The house is empty,
Unlike the grave

At St. Mary’s Church
In Beverly.
“It Must Be Done”
~William Wilberforce

Mother is ill.

I am to go to London
To live with

My Uncle William
My Aunt Hannah.

They have no children
And are happy to have me.

At ten, though,
All I can think is:

Another loss.