

# *One Voice:*

The Story of William Wilberforce

BY AMY LYKOSH

 Avyx

One Voice: The Story of William Wilberforce

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“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

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# INTRODUCTION

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## “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?

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*Chapter One*  
CHILDHOOD

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“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

**“August 24, 1759”**

*~Robert Wilberforce*

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.