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REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE
OF
SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY.

1883.

SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, 1883.

MINISTERS.

MONCURE D. CONWAY, M.A., Inglewood, Bedford Park, Chiswick, W.
Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., 110, Gilmore Place, Edinburgh.

COMMITTEE.

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Dr. E. BERDOE
Mr. G. W. COOKE
,, A. J. CLEMENTS
,, T. DIXON
,, E. DALLOW
Mrs. I. FISHER
Miss C. FLETCHER
Mr. J. A. GOTCH
Mrs. GOFF
Mr. J. HALLAM

Mr. THOS. HEALEY
,, G. HICKSON
Mrs. SEAMER
Mr. G. E. SADD
,, H. THORNDIKE
,, J. H. K. TODD
,, C. W. THIES
,, W. D. THOMSON
,, T. R. WRIGHT
,, G. WALKER

TREASURER AND CHAIRMAN.

Mr. GEORGE HICKSON, 35, Highbury New Park, N.

SECRETARY.

Miss C. FLETCHER, 39, Spurstowe Road, Hackney, E.

AUDITORS.

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Mr. C. H. SEYLER

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Sir S. H. WATERLOW,
Bart., M.P.,
Mr. A. J. WATERLOW

TRUSTEES OF THE MORTGAGE REDEMPTION FUND.

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Mr. R. CARTER.

Mr. T. HEALEY.

Secretary of Soiree Committee.

Miss E. PHIPSON, 5, Park Place, Upper Baker Street, N.W.

Secretary of Lectures Committee.

CONRAD W. THIES, 76, Graham Road, Hackney.

Choir Master and Organist.

J. S. SHEDLOCK, B.A., 22, Melrose Gardens, West Kensington Park, W.

REPORT FOR 1883.

IN presenting their Annual Report for the year 1883, your Committee have thought it desirable to give, not only a statement of the facts immediately concerning the Society, but also a glance at outside events, in so far as they illustrate the work which it is the endeavour of South Place Religious Society to carry on. Such glance must of necessity be brief and imperfect, but it will not be without its use, if on the one hand it tend to quicken and strengthen amongst our own Members those feelings of sympathy with the great human family, which are the basis of all morality; and on the other, if it afford, as it can hardly fail to do, an opportunity for stating, however imperfectly, the position occupied by this Society in the world of religious thought, and giving some general outline of the principles which serve us in place of a creed.

Broadly speaking, it may be said that all public events ought to be included in our survey, for all depend upon, or affect human conduct, and the improvement of human conduct in every sphere of life, private, social, and national, is the object aimed at by this Society; but it being obviously impossible to attempt such a comprehensive task, we must content ourselves with referring to one or two of those occurrences which, though they may appear trivial to the careless observer, are not without importance, as helping to measure the progress made in the world of thought—a world which all serious minds will admit, is the dominating factor in human progress.

Perhaps the most striking event of the year, from this point of view, was the prosecution for blasphemy, resulting in the condemnation of three men to various terms of imprisonment, the shortest being in excess of that frequently inflicted for crimes of brutal violence. Without adopting the stereotyped phrase about

evil being over-ruled for good by a higher power, it may be pointed out that, on the whole, this prosecution has done much more good than harm to the cause of freedom, and that the sufferings of those primarily concerned will not have been in vain. While it is discouraging to find that such things are possible in the boasted land of religious liberty in the last quarter of the 19th century, and still more so to see the last jot and tittle of the cruel sentence exacted in spite of many protests, whilst other offenders, who, in their zeal for an ancient creed, had committed actual outrage, had a large portion of their sentences remitted, it was satisfactory to notice the very general outburst of indignation which the whole proceeding evoked. More especially, it may be remarked, that on the second trial, the law upon the subject was laid down by the Lord Chief Justice in a more liberal spirit than had ever been done before ; so liberally indeed, that it may be doubted whether, if this ruling is generally accepted by the judges, any future prosecution for blasphemy can be successful. At the same time, as this is by no means certain, and as the result depends so much upon the presiding judge—as was shown in this case—no effort should be spared to so alter the law as to make the punishment of any man for the free expression of his opinions impossible.

This case was also useful as a kind of mental touchstone for testing the principles and logic of liberal thinkers, several of whom were at first disposed to approve the prosecution from disgust at the character of the incriminated publication. But it should be remembered that the offence charged was *blasphemy*, not obscene libel, and, therefore, to support the prosecution was tantamount to sanctioning the punishment of a man, not for blasphemy, but for lack of culture and literary taste, whilst sentiments equally revolting to the religious views of the majority might be freely published by University graduates or those of high social position. It was somewhat amusing to find that one of these cultured offenders, the chief apostle of sweetness and light, had in a new edition of one of his works withdrawn a simile between the Deity and a member of the House of Peers, *out of deference to the feelings of the latter*. At the meeting of our Society, held on the first Sunday in April, 1883, to discuss this matter, it

was satisfactory to find an almost unanimous condemnation of the prosecution and sentence. Lastly, in connection with this subject, it may be hoped that many of those persons, who, though supposing themselves to be orthodox, yet condemned these proceedings, may be led to consider whether their position is intellectually tenable; whether, in fact, if eternal salvation depend upon orthodoxy of belief, any one who in any way endeavours to unsettle that belief, ought not, in the general interest, to be punished with the utmost rigour of the law. Such an inquiry, if honestly conducted, can hardly fail to lead to the conclusion that conduct, not creed, is "the one thing needful."

Whilst the year opened with this outbreak of bigotry, it closed in a wave of excitement of a much more satisfactory character, arising in great measure from the publication of the "Bitter Cry of Outcast London." The importance of this matter lies not so much in the facts disclosed, which were no novelty to those who had studied the condition of the poor, as in the interest which a knowledge of the facts created, showing that society can no longer placidly enjoy its luxuries, and spend its time in the pursuit of pleasure, literature and art, whilst wretchedness, squalor, and what it deems an undue degree of poverty, prevail in its midst. The public advocacy of socialism by a distinguished poet, and the crowding of St. James' Hall by well dressed audiences to hear lectures on Land Nationalization—whatever may be thought of the intrinsic value, propriety, or even justice of these schemes for social improvement—are additional proofs of the increased attention now being paid to social problems. Horrible London was depicted many years ago, by Mr. Mayhew, in the columns of a newspaper whose name is now almost forgotten, quite as vividly as it has recently been by Mr. Sims and others, but the tale was then comparatively unheeded. To-day the very same facts have evoked an amount of sympathy which we may fairly hope will not entirely evaporate in magazine articles, or be smothered under a deluge of religious tracts.

It is also very gratifying to note, that the efforts of the benevolent are not confined to supplying merely the bodily necessities of the poor. An influential meeting was held at the Mansion House, near the close of the year, with the object of raising a

sufficient fund to provide a large building in the East End, where lectures may be given, classes held, books and newspapers read, pictures, flowers, plants, and good music enjoyed, throughout the year. The Trustees of the Beaumont Institution have offered a large sum to start the scheme, which was advocated in a powerful speech by Professor Huxley, and it may be cordially recommended to consideration and support. Several efforts of the same kind, but on a humbler scale, have already met with some success in various parts of London, and in more than one instance valuable aid has been rendered by Members of this Society.

In concluding our glance at what is going on around us, we may refer for a moment to the series of articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, entitled "Centres of Spiritual Activity." The fact that such articles should be deemed worthy of a prominent place in a journal not in any way devoted to religious matters, is in itself remarkable; but the two points specially interesting to us are—first, that Positivism, a religion without a God, is included in the list, and secondly, that most of the writers seem anxious to show how liberal, comprehensive, and free from dogma their respective communions are. This is especially noticeable in the case of the gentleman who describes a "Centre" belonging to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, though it is generally considered, and not without reason, that this body is one of the strictest sects of orthodoxy. When we find a minister of this orthodox persuasion asserting in print "we have no articles, and in the strict sense of the term no creed," may we not hope that the twilight of all creeds is rapidly approaching.

The most important event in connection with our own Society, has been the appointment of Dr. Andrew Wilson to share the platform with Mr. Conway, which was unanimously agreed to by a General Meeting, held on Sunday, April 15th. This arrangement was proposed by Mr. Conway himself, who desired to be partially relieved from the constant pressure of his weekly duties, and also to have the opportunity of visiting America, Australia, and India. He continued his work here until the end of July, since which time, with the exception of the usual holiday in August, Dr. Wilson has lectured every Sunday; the character of his discourses being such as to abundantly justify the

arrangement. His previous lectures had created a very favourable impression which a further acquaintance has strengthened, as shown by the manner in which the attendance has kept up. Many of our Members have read with great interest a series of letters from Mr. Conway, descriptive of his travels, which have appeared in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, and all no doubt are looking forward with very pleasant anticipation to his re-appearance amongst us in March, invigorated in health, and with a store of varied experience gathered in his circuit of the globe.

The thanks of the Society are due to Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Mr. W. F. Revell, for the discourses delivered by them early in the year.

With regard to the musical portion of the services, it is hardly necessary to say anything, no change having been made in the arrangements, and the members being as well able as the Committee to judge of the results. The old maxim, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, applies pre-eminently to musical matters, and probably that which some enjoy greatly is less appreciated by others; but it will no doubt have been observed that, owing to our able musical director, Mr. Shedlock, having been of late more freely consulted in the selection of anthems, a greater variety has been introduced, and thus it is hoped that all tastes will in turn be gratified.

During the first two months of Mr. Conway's journey, his absence was, to some extent, compensated for by the weekly publication of "Lessons for the Day," and it was with great regret that the Committee witnessed the cessation of that serial at the end of September. Since its commencement more than 140,000 copies have been distributed, and thus the teaching of South Place must have exerted a wide-spread influence. The Publishing Committee having performed the function for which it was constituted, is desirous of winding up its affairs in the manner stated in its own report, which accompanies this, and your Committee recommend that this course be adopted.

On referring to the Balance Sheet it will be seen that the deficit existing last year has, in accordance with the resolution passed at the last annual meeting, been entirely cleared off by the liberality of the Members. Amongst other subscribers the

Society is indebted to the generosity of Mrs. Mensbier for so substantial a gift as to enable the Committee, in addition to the above, to add materially to the Mortgage Redemption Fund. The total addition to this fund during the year, partly from the above-mentioned source and partly from the amount handed over by the Soiree Committee, aided by other donations, etc., has been £104 11s. 1d., making a total of £334 5s. 1d.

The seat rents have not realized quite so much as last year, but the deficiency has not proved so great as was feared might be the case. On the other hand the lettings of the building for meetings, &c., have increased by about £10. During this year also the house adjoining the Chapel has come into our possession, and forms an additional source of income.

The collection made on Hospital Sunday, which was devoted to Mrs. Hampson's Home, an entirely unsectarian institution, amounted to £31 7s. 9d., and that made on the last Sunday of the year in aid of the Benevolent Fund, to £13 4s. 3d. This fund is now very low, and though it is not desirable that it should ever be made so prominent a feature as to invite applications for assistance, such an addition to it as would enable the Committee to meet any case of emergency is very desirable.

The Monthly Soirees from October to April, and the annual and new year's dances have as heretofore afforded welcome and much appreciated opportunities for social intercourse; those who have recently joined the Society, in particular, are on these occasions able to make the acquaintance of their fellow members; their presence is especially welcome, and it is hoped that they will avail themselves of the facilities thus offered even more freely than they have hitherto done. The thanks of the Society are eminently due to the ladies and gentlemen by whose assistance these re-unions have been made so successful.

The Tuesday Evening Lectures Committee has again done good service by arranging for Papers and Lectures either free or at a small charge. Owing to the unfortunate illness of Mr. J. Allanson Picton, his course of lectures on the English Commonwealth, which was to have been given last spring had to be deferred, but means were found to supply the gap very efficiently by papers and discussions; and during the autumn

Mr. Picton, having happily recovered, was able to fulfil his engagement to the evident satisfaction of large audiences. Two courses of lectures, one (now in progress) on Primitive Man, by Mr. Sidney B. J. Skertchley, F.G.S., and one on Optimism and Pessimism, by Mr. W. C. Coupland, M.A., B.Sc., have been arranged, and will no doubt prove very attractive, and instructive.

A further step in this direction was taken towards the close of the year, when your Committee, on the application of three Members, granted the use of the building on Sunday afternoons for the delivery of free lectures intended more especially for men and women of the working class, no collection being made. This experiment is as yet in its infancy, but its success already seems assured.

On Sunday evenings the building has again been occupied by the People's Concert Society. It is gratifying to know that these Sunday Concerts have, so far, been the most successful of any conducted by that Society. They are the first of the kind ever given in England, at which no attempt has ever been made to conciliate sabbatarian prejudices by forbidding applause or confining the music to that of a so-called sacred character. A similar series on Sunday afternoons has this year been inaugurated at the West End, and is rapidly achieving similar popularity.

A few alterations and repairs to the building have been effected during the year, which it is hoped will add materially to the convenience and comfort of the members.

NOTICE.

In accordance with the Rules, seven members of the Committee will retire from office at the ensuing Annual Meeting, and are not eligible for re-election until next year. The members so retiring are Mrs. Fisher, Miss Fletcher, Mr. J. A. Gotch, Mr. J. Hallam, Mr. H. Thorndike, Mr. J. H. K. Todd, and Mr. G. Walker. In addition Mr. G. W. Cooke, Mr. T. Dixon, and Mr. T. Healey have resigned. The Society will, therefore, have to elect ten new members to serve on the Committee, and two auditors. Nominations for the above offices must be forwarded

to the Secretary (in writing) on or before February 1st. Printed forms for nominations can be obtained in the library, or will be forwarded by the Secretary upon application.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 14th, at 7 p.m. precisely.

FORM OF BEQUEST TO THE MORTGAGE-
REDEMPTION AND REBUILDING FUND.

The cost of the freehold land and buildings belonging to the Society was defrayed by the founders in 1825, a sum of £2,850 being raised thereon by mortgage for the purpose of making certain alterations and additions to the premises. It is desirable that this indebtedness should be cancelled in order that the Society may occupy a secure financial position, and that no obstacle of this nature may in the future retard the erection of a building suitable to its increasing needs.

I give and bequeath unto the Treasurer for the time being of "SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY," the sum of

to be raised and paid by and out of such part of my personal estate and effects as may be lawfully applied for that purpose, such sum to be applied in the first place towards the redemption of the mortgage upon the land and buildings of the Society situated and being in South Place, Finsbury, and secondly, towards providing a fund for the re-building of the said premises.

N.B.—Devises of land, or bequests of money charged on land, are void by the Statute of Mortmain.

Statement of Accounts of South Place Religious Society, for the year 1883.

GENERAL ACCOUNT.

| ORDINARY INCOME. | | | | ORDINARY EXPENDITURE. | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------------|-----------------|--|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Dr. | Received by Treasurer. | To receive. | Total for 1883. | Paid by Treasurer. | To pay. | Cr. | |
| £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| To Seat Rents for 1883, viz. :- | | | | By Advances, 1882, repaid to Treasurer ... | 110 9 8 | | |
| Received in 1882... | 24 18 9 | | | Mr. M. D. Conway, 8 months ... £333 6 8 | | | |
| ,, 1883... | 560 1 0 | 560 1 0 | | Dr. And. Wilson, 4 months ... 166 13 4 | | | |
| | 584 19 9 | | | Choir ... | 500 0 0 | | 500 0 0 |
| To receive | £60 0 0 | | | Salaries ... | 143 3 6 | | 143 3 6 |
| Doubtful | 20 0 0 | 40 0 0 | | Advertisements ... | 46 6 0 | | 46 6 0 |
| | 624 19 9 | | 624 19 9 | Printing, Stationery, Stamps, &c.* ... | 23 7 6 | | 23 7 6 |
| Collections | | 79 16 5 | 79 16 5 | Tuning Organ ... | 28 0 2 | 6 0 0 | 6 0 0 |
| Sale of Hymn Books and Pamphlets | 178 13 7 | | | Sundries ... | 13 10 8 | 7 3 0 | 20 13 8 |
| Pd. to Mr. Conway Publishing Committee | £20 8 0 | | | Rates, Taxes, and Insurance ... | 36 9 6 | 4 19 8 | 41 9 2 |
| | 96 9 10 | | | Coals and Gas ... | 27 4 2 | 11 0 0 | 38 4 2 |
| Owing for Dr. And. Wilson's Publications | 61 15 9 | 61 15 9 | | Interest on Mortgage, 4 per cent., on £2,850 (less Income Tax) ... | 63 18 3 | 49 0 0 | 112 18 3 |
| | 3 8 3 | | | Repairs, Ordinary ... | 41 6 5 | 17 9 6 | 58 15 11 |
| | 58 7 6 | | 58 7 6 | Owing for Dr. And. Wilson's publications (contra) ... | | 3 8 3 | |
| Rent of House (now £145 instead of £70 per annum) | | 90 0 0 | 36 5 0 | | | | |
| Chapel Lettings | | 118 14 0 | 24 15 0 | | | | |
| | | 910 7 2 | 101 0 0 | | | | |
| To Seat Rents for 1882, viz. :- | | | 1032 17 8 | By Sundries, 1882, balance due 31st Dec., 1882 | £1033 15 10 | 99 0 5 | 1018 18 4 |
| Unpaid 31st December, 1882 | £30 0 0 | | | Rates | 3 19 2 | | |
| Received in excess of estimate | 2 8 0 | | 2 8 0 | Gas, &c. | 1 8 0 | | |
| Seat Rents for 1884, received in advance | | 32 8 0 | | Interest on Mortgage | 9 0 0 | | |
| Rent of House unpaid 31st December, 1882 | | 25 19 6 | | Repairs, Ordinary | 47 0 0 | | |
| Chapel Lettings | | 52 10 0 | | Paired over to Mrs. Hampson's Home | 6 11 11 | | |
| Collection for Mrs. Hampson's Home (June, 1883) | | 24 15 0 | | | 31 7 9 | | |
| | | 31 7 9 | | Balance to be received | | 1 19 7 | |
| EXTRAORDINARY INCOME. | | | | By Balance in Treasurer's hands | 45 18 0 | | |
| To Subscriptions to meet last year's Deficit | £101 13 3 | 101 13 3 | | SURPLUS FOR 1883, viz. :- | | | |
| Actual amount of Deficit on last year's Profit and Loss account | 96 2 6 | | | Surplus on Ordinary Income | £13 19 4 | | |
| Excess of Subscriptions | 5 10 9 | | 5 10 9 | Excess of Subscriptions to meet 1882 deficit | 5 10 9 | | |
| | | | | Received in excess of estimated seat rents due for 1882 | 2 8 0 | | |
| | £1179 0 8 | 101 0 0 | 1040 16 5 | | | | 21 18 1 |
| | | | | | £1179 0 8 | 101 0 0 | 1040 16 5 |

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT.

| ASSETS. | | | | LIABILITIES. | | | |
|--|--|---------|----------|---|--|---------|----------|
| Dr. | | | | | | Cr. | |
| £ s. d. | | | | | | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| December 31st, 1882—To Balance, Deficit for 1882 | | | 96 2 6 | By Deficit for 1882 paid off out of special Subscriptions | | | 96 2 6 |
| December 31st, 1883—To Balance | | | 21 18 1 | Surplus for 1883 | | | 21 18 1 |
| | | | £118 0 7 | | | | £118 0 7 |
| Balance in Treasurer's hands | | | 45 18 0 | Seat Rents for 1884, carried to new year | | | 25 19 6 |
| Amounts to be received for 1883 | | 101 0 0 | | Balance on profit and loss account—Surplus for 1883 | | | 21 18 1 |
| Less payments to be made for 1883 | | 99 0 5 | | | | | |
| | | | 1 19 7 | | | | |
| | | | £47 17 7 | | | | £47 17 7 |

FUND FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE MORTGAGE DEBT OF THE CHAPEL, £2,850.

| Dr. | | | | Cr. | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------|--|--|---------|-----------|
| £ s. d. | | | | | | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| To Donations | | | 0 15 0 | By Purchase of £100 New 3 per Cents at 99½ and bkge. | | | 99 15 0 |
| Collection in May, 1883 | | | 8 8 1 | Balance in hand | | | 4 16 1 |
| Part of £81 12s. realised by the sale of one share in the London and County Banking Company, Limited, presented by Mrs. Mensbier (the remaining £28 15s. 3d. being devoted to the fund for the extinction of last year's Deficit on General Account) | | | 52 16 9 | | | | |
| Profit on Soirées | | | 18 3 8 | | | | |
| two Annual Soirées | | | 16 5 3 | | | | |
| April Dividend on £227 1s. 8d. New 3 per Cents. | | | 3 0 3 | | | | |
| October, £327 1s. 8d. | | | 4 16 1 | | | | |
| | | | £104 11 1 | | | | £104 11 1 |

MORTGAGE REDEMPTION FUND INVESTMENT ACCOUNT,

In the names of Messrs. Mark Eagles Marsden; Robert Carter; and Thomas Healey (Trustees of the Fund).

| Dr. | | | | Cr. | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|----------|--------------------------------|--|---------|----------|
| £ s. d. | | | | | | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| Dec. 31st, 1882—To Balance, £227 1 8 New 3 per Cents. | | | 229 14 0 | By Balance December 31st, 1883 | | | 329 9 0 |
| Aug. 2nd, 1883—To Purchase 100 0 0 " " at 99½ and Bkge. | | | 99 15 0 | | | | |
| Total | £327 1 8 New 3 per Cents... | | £329 9 0 | | | | £329 9 0 |

BENEVOLENT FUND.

| Dr. | | | | Cr. | | | |
|--|--|--|----------|-------------------------------------|--|---------|----------|
| £ s. d. | | | | | | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| To Balance in hand 31st December, 1882 | | | 22 6 1 | By Sundry payments | | | 19 15 0 |
| Donations | | | 1 5 0 | Balance in hand 31st December, 1883 | | | 17 0 4 |
| Collection on 30th December, 1883 | | | 13 4 3 | | | | |
| | | | £36 15 4 | | | | £36 15 4 |

The deficit which the accounts showed at the end of last year having been extinguished by special subscription, there is, for the year 1883, a surplus of £21 18s. 1d. The Seat Rents have declined by about £45; on the other hand, the rent of the house yields, under the new arrangement, an increased income which more than counterbalances this loss. The Lettings also show an improvement of about £10.

Examined by us, this 20th January, 1884, and found correct,

J. A. LYON, CLARENCE H. SEYLER, } AUDITORS.

* The value of Hymn Books and Pamphlets in Stock, belonging to this account, estimated at cost price, is about £88.