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SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL.

COLONEL FORNEY'S
LETTER.

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LETTERS FROM THE EDITOR

The following letters were received from our readers and are published in this issue. The names of the writers are given in full, and their addresses are given in full, unless otherwise stated. The names of the writers are given in full, and their addresses are given in full, unless otherwise stated.

Dear Sir,

I have just received your issue of the 1st of the month, and I am glad to hear that you are still publishing it. I have been a subscriber for some time, and I have always found it very interesting and useful. I have just received your issue of the 1st of the month, and I am glad to hear that you are still publishing it. I have been a subscriber for some time, and I have always found it very interesting and useful.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

[Address]

COLONEL FORNEY'S LETTER.

LONDON, November 17, 1874.

COSMOPOLITAN London is in nothing more interesting than in the variety of its numerous religious organizations. While the Church of England dominates everything, so large is the population and so varied the institutions of learning and benevolence, that there is room for an infinite variety of thought and organization. The Catholics of London are an immense body, and their edifices are numerous and imposing. I have often been impressed by the earnestness with which, in passing through the ancient churches and cathedrals, now in possession of the Church of England, the followers of Rome denounce the meanness which wrested from them these splendid triumphs of architecture and placed them in charge of the present reigning religion. In fact, the choicest treasures of the widespread and absorbing Church of England were originally the property of the Catholics,

and it is difficult to deny to the latter their claim to the credit of having founded these gorgeous structures. Mr. Gladstone's last pamphlet seems to have aroused the animosities of both sides, and it is curious to notice that while he touches the sensitive nerve alike of Catholics and Protestants, he has not yet received that measure of Episcopal support which, in view of the growing hostility in England to the Catholic religion, might have reasonably been expected. He arraigns the Church of Rome, upon authority sufficient to himself, as claiming superiority over the civil system of every government; and while this estimate or argument, call it what you please, is differently answered by the Catholics, the Church of England leaders accept it as a substantial reinforcement of their own position, while challenging the sincerity of Mr. Gladstone, whom they accuse of intending ultimately to overthrow their own establishment. The Catholics, including such eminent prelates as Archbishop Manning and Monsignor Capel, attack him with an acrimony which shows the strength of his position. Archbishop Manning, in his letter to the New York *Herald* (by the way, published in all the London papers the next day, by the consent of Mr. Bennett), dated November 10, carries his reply to the late Liberal Premier to the extent of declaring that the differences between them have overcast a friendship of forty-five years. The stoutest champion of Mr. Gladstone in this *mêlée* will be the German Protestant Empire, led by the

dogmatic Bismarck, and there can be little question that as the war of words increases it will crystallize into a formidable conflict, both sides armed *cap-à-pie*. However the present difficulty may end, it is easy to predict that all the Protestant elements will gradually take sides against the Catholics, so that, although Mr. Gladstone may be set aside, he will at least have given coherence to elements long discordant. In stating this case, I desire, without taking part in what is evidently the beginning of a long and terrible struggle, and what may end in another great European war, to be regarded as making a plain statement of current history.

Another character seems to stand in a curious relation to this bitter controversy between the theologians. That is the strangely-gifted and wholly original Moncure D. Conway, the head of the Materialistic congregation at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, the temple in which for many years preached the celebrated W. J. Fox, some time member of Parliament for a large manufacturing town, Oldham, and known as the champion of the principles of Radical Democracy. Mr. Conway is a Virginian, who came here first as an advanced advocate of the Union cause seven years ago. Having been previously well known in our country for the great ability with which he resisted the productions of slavery and took issue with the peculiar doctrines of the politicians in his native State, the prominence with which he identified himself

with the North in London soon gave him a large hold among certain advanced thinkers who have always sympathized with America. In this way he was called to the pulpit at South Place, where he still continues to preside, attracting large numbers every Sunday morning by the peculiarities of his opinions and his style. His ability is conceded to be of the highest order, and when I sat under him last Sunday I could not restrain my admiration of his genius. A tall, spare man of about forty, with a most intellectual yet ascetic face, closely resembling John A. Kasson of Iowa, member of the present Congress, his oratory is quite unpretending, rarely rising to declamation, and only when presenting his strongest point expressing intensity. He is of the materialistic school, in fact a bow-shot beyond John Stuart Mill in his Theism, rejecting a personal Deity and insisting that what we call God is within us—our inner conception, manifested by our aspirations after truth. It was a novel sensation to follow this brilliant student and scholar through his intricate reasonings in support of this position, and to mark the effect of his rhetoric upon his large and thoughtful audience, most of whom belonged to the better classes. They accept his platform with enthusiasm, and as most of them are people of rare culture, their number is rapidly increasing. The singing was exquisite, and the hymns, of which I here transcribe two, were given with unusual sweetness and power :

ANTHEM.

We never, never will bow down
 To the rude stock or sculptured stone.
 We worship God, and God alone.

HYMN.

Everlasting ! changing never !
 Of one strength, no more, no less,
 Thine almightiness for ever,
 Ever one Thy holiness ;
 Thee eternal,
 Thee all glorious, we possess.

Shall things withered, fashions olden,
 Keep us from life's flowing spring ?
 Waits for us the promise golden,
 Waits each new diviner thing.
 Onward ! onward !
 Why this hopeless tarrying ?

Nearer to Thee would we venture,
 Of Thy truth more largely take ;
 Upon life diviner enter,
 Into day more glorious break ?
 To the ages
 Fair bequests and costly make.

By the old aspirants glorious,
 By each soul heroical,
 By the strivers half-victorious,
 By thy Jesus and thy Paul,
 Truth's own martyrs,
 We are summoned one and all.

By each saving word unspoken,
 By Thy truth, as yet half-won,
 By each idol still unbroken,
 By Thy will, yet poorly done,
 O Almighty!
 We are borne resistless on.

Mr. Conway receives £250, or \$1,250, a year for preaching once on Sunday morning at South Place Church, and probably almost as much for his discourses on Sunday evening at Camden Town. He is also the correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial*, and his letters are as peculiar as his spoken essays. He is also a contributor on theological subjects to several of the London scientific reviews, and a great favorite in society. Very naturally, he will be found foremost in the attack upon the Catholics, yet he could not be more trenchant than in his various criticisms upon the Church of England. He admires Bismarck immensely, and prefers the German to the French example, having sympathized with the former in the late war. He is a welcome visitor in many houses, is a charming companion, and outside his philosophical ideas is one of the most agreeable talkers. South Place Chapel is "Liberty Hall" in the freedom with which all creeds and opinions are discussed within its walls. Robert Collier, of Chicago, filled his pulpit several times a few years ago, and the Indian reformer, "Chunder Sen," there set forth his views. Next Thursday Miss Downing, a Catholic, is to discuss in

the debating society of the chapel, from her point of view, "Conventual Institutions, their use, &c." I could not help smiling on Sunday, after Conway had denied the existence of a devil, and proclaimed his doubt as to a personal Deity, insisting that every man had his own God in his better actions, when among the announcements of the proceedings of the coming week he read a notice of a lecture to be delivered at St. George's Hall, by Dr. Zerffi, of the South Kensington Museum, on the "Concrete and Abstract Nature of the Devil." An American gentleman at my side, who had been repeatedly startled by the extraordinary positions of Mr. Conway, quietly remarked, "What is the use of lecturing about the devil, when he has just been trying to convince us that he has no existence?" My friend left the chapel a great deal terrified at what he had heard, and doubtless went into quarantine, to get rid of the contagion, in the nearest Calvinistic church he could find.

J. W. F.

[NOTE.—Colonel Forney's letter has been reproduced without corrections; although some of his statements, especially as regards money matters, are not correct.]

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view, the "Lithology, their first, &c." I
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the nearest Calvinistic church he could find.

J. W. H.

My dear friend, I have just received your letter of the 10th inst. and am glad to hear that you are well. I have not time to write you more at present, but will do so as soon as possible. I am, my dear friend, ever yours, &c.



