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REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE
OF
SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY,
FOR THE YEAR 1881.

SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, 1881.

Minister :

MONCURE D. CONWAY, M.A., Inglewood, Bedford Park, Chiswick, W.

Committee :

Mr. W. CROWDER.
,, P. EVERITT.
,, S. G. FENTON.
Mrs. I. FISHER.
Mr. O. FITCH.
Miss C. FLETCHER.
Mr. J. A. GOTCH.
,, C. B. GRANT.
,, J. HALLAM.
,, R. G. HEMBER.

Mr. E. R. LEVEY.
Miss E. PHIPSON.
Mr. J. PUNNETT.
,, W. J. REYNOLDS.
,, G. E. SADD.
Miss SHAPLAND.
Mr. W. C. STOREY.
,, H. THORNDIKE.
,, J. H. K. TODD.
,, G. WALKER.

Mr. T. R. WRIGHT.

Treasurer and Chairman :

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

Secretary :

Mr. W. J. REYNOLDS, 19, Cawley Road, Victoria Park, E.

Auditors :

Mr. J. A. LYON.

Mr. C. H. SEYLER.

Trustees :

Mr. W. BURR.
,, J. CUNNINGTON.
,, G. HICKSON.
,, J. A. LYON.
,, M. E. MARSDEN.

Mr. W. C. NEVITT.
,, J. L. SHUTER.
,, F. WALTERS.
Sir S. H. WATERLOW, Bart.,
M.P.

Mr. A. J. WATERLOW.

Secretary Soiree Committee :

Miss E. PHIPSON, 14, Connaught Square, W.

Choir Master and Organist :

Mr. J. S. SHEDLOCK, 4, Lower James Street, Golden Square, W.

SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY.

REPORT FOR 1881.

IN taking a glance at those events of the past year which have touched most closely the aims and sympathies of this Society, we find many things which afford ground for encouragement and congratulation. To us, it cannot be a matter for unconcerned or indifferent reflection, that the sinister divorce between politics and morality which has often been illustrated in our previous history, is no longer witnessed. In nothing has our boasted civilization been more deeply discredited, than in the cynical contempt with which the authority of ethical principles has been repudiated in the direction of national affairs, even by men who would be the last to dispute their binding force in private life. A new era, we may thankfully hope, has now dawned upon us, in which "our country, right or wrong," shall no longer be the watchword ; when British interests shall no more be made the excuse for territorial aggression ; when the rights of other nations shall be equally respected, whatever their colour, creed, material power, or credit in the money market ; when, in short, the weak are treated with as much consideration as the strong, and it is generally acknowledged that the real greatness of Great Britain rests on her moral grandeur rather than on her military prowess and pecuniary resources.

This principle has been illustrated not only in foreign affairs, but also in the remedial legislation of the past session with regard to Ireland. This is not the place to deal in any detail with this

much vexed question, but we cannot fail to observe with satisfaction that, in the face of much opposition and strong temptation to pursue the old lines of stern repression, the one main desire and determination of this country has been to do justice, regardless of class interests.

But while, in looking around us, we see much to rejoice at, we are also bound to face the fact that there is much which may well give pause to optimistic congratulations, and lead us to take a sober measure of the strength of that fortress of superstition and intolerance, which it is one of our main objects to undermine. Not to dwell upon various reported instances of persons losing public appointments by reason of their heterodox opinions (either openly avowed, or, as in one case, only suspected), the case of Mr. Bradlaugh is of itself sufficient to display most impressively at once the virulence and the vitality of the forces which are arrayed against freedom of opinion in religious matters. Although to the thoughtful mind there is something intensely ludicrous in the notion that the status of an almighty ruler of the universe can be affected by the admission of an individual who denies his existence, to a seat in Parliament; or that his position can be rendered more secure by the efforts of the gentlemen who kindly come forward to protect him; still the main aspect of the case is a serious one, and indicates the necessity for unremitting vigilance and renewed effort on the part of all who value either political or religious freedom. Our members will, doubtless, remember how effectively this disgraceful attempt to wrest constitutional forms into the service of theological animosity, was dealt with by Mr. Conway in his lecture, "The Oath and its Ethics," and will be glad to know that the Committee sent a copy of the address when published to every Member of Parliament, and to the editors of the leading newspapers.

Attention has recently been called, in the public press, to the comparatively small attendance at the ordinary places of worship in various towns; but the facts thus disclosed can hardly be sur-

prising to those who recognize the great gulf which is now firmly established, and is daily growing wider, between present-day knowledge and dogmas which took shape when the whole of that knowledge was practically non-existent. The question which rather calls for an answer is — why, in the face of so much growing intelligence, do so many *still* go to church? The answer given in a leading periodical—that even an Agnostic ought to go to church in order to set a good example, because, on the whole, the teaching does more good than harm, and that he does not deny a deity, but only *doubts* his existence—will, we should hope, satisfy few, and might easily be shown to be untenable. Though the Agnostic may not deny, as a philosophical proposition, the existence of a creator of the universe, he most certainly must, if his moral nature be such as to qualify him for a position in decent society, deprecate the worship of the jealous, revengeful, and despotic deity of the ancient Hebrews, whose praises are appointed “to be said or sung in churches”; and the doctrine that what one does not believe one’s self should be countenanced, in order that it may continue to impose on the less instructed, is morally pernicious; and, if practically carried out, would prevent all reforms whatever.

We can hardly pass by unnoticed the death of Dean Stanley, occupying, as he did, so conspicuous a position in the Broad Church party. In the service which he rendered to the emancipation of religion from the fetters of dogma, he perhaps “built better than he knew”; but not the less on this account do we owe an appreciative tribute to the large human sympathy displayed throughout his career, and to the fact that in him theological rancour and prejudice ever found an unflinching antagonist.

The publication of the Revised Version of the New Testament is an event not without interest, but its main importance lies in the fact that it brought home to multitudes in this country, perhaps for the first time, the fact that Jesus and his Apostles did not

speak or write in English, and that there might possibly be doubts as to what really was the "Word of God."

During the past year it has been a source of much pleasure to your Committee to note not only the bodily health and vigour which Mr. Conway has enjoyed, but the increasing richness of his mental resources, and especially to remark that throughout his lectures there has run a pure vein of moral earnestness which cannot have failed to influence his hearers for the better. Several of these lectures have been published, and have met with a considerable sale; but we commend to your consideration, and that of our successors, the question whether some means cannot be devised for obtaining for these addresses a much wider circulation than can be expected under the present system.

Our platform has also been very ably occupied during the year by Mrs. Livermore; three times by Dr. Andrew Wilson, who kindly presented us for publication his last lecture on "The Religious Aspects of Health"; and by Mr. Frederic Harrison, whose lecture on "Pantheism and Cosmic Emotion" has also been kindly given to us by Mr. Harrison, and printed during the past year.

The attendance on Sunday mornings has been good, but there still remain more seats unlet than we had hoped would be the case.

During the recess the outside of the Chapel was painted. This was accomplished without trenching on our ordinary sources of income, by the aid of a few of the members, who voluntarily raised the necessary amount. A small sum has also been expended in advertising the services at railway stations; and though much effect has not yet been traced to this source, it is hoped that a steady continuance of the same means may not be without substantial results.

A fund has been started for the purpose of paying off the mortgage debt in accordance with the recommendation received by the Committee at the last Annual Meeting. The sum obtained during the past year, including subscriptions, special collection

and profits on Soirées, amounted to £74 1s. 8d. Trustees will have to be appointed, in whose names this fund will be invested. Owing to the death of the mortgagee, a new mortgage had to be effected, and it is gratifying to be able to state that this was arranged at a reduced rate of interest.

In order to meet objections which were sometimes raised to the character of some of the hymns in our collection, a preface has been prepared by Mr. Conway, explaining the circumstances under which they are used, which can hardly fail to prevent any misunderstanding in future.

The monthly soirées during the past year have been unusually attractive, and the Committee desire to thank most heartily the ladies and gentlemen through whose unwearied exertions they have been made so successful. The Annual Ball also in April afforded much satisfaction to the members. By these united means a sum of £30 9s. 8d. has been added to our resources.

By reference to the Balance Sheet it will be seen that the receipts for seat rents are in excess of those of the previous year. On the occasion of the death of a highly respected and valued member of the congregation, a special appeal was made on behalf of his widow and family, which produced a sum of £115 11s. 4d., which is included in the Benevolent Fund.

In our last report no reference was made to the musical portion of our services, as it was felt not to be altogether satisfactory, and was then receiving the anxious attention of the Committee. The same careful consideration has been continued throughout the year, and finally, though with great reluctance, it was decided to replace the whole of the choir, with one exception, and also the organist. It is as yet too early to speak very decisively as to the result, especially as unforeseen difficulties at the last moment prevented the full realization of the improvement, but it is the firm determination of your Committee not to rest satisfied until this important portion of our public service is rendered as nearly perfect as possible.

Your Committee cannot conclude this Report without expressing the great regret with which they have received the resignation by **Mr. W. J. Reynolds** of the important office of Hon. Sec. to the Society. For many years he has discharged the important and onerous duties devolving upon him in a manner beyond all praise, and it will be a satisfaction to all to know that it is from sheer lack of time, not from any diminution of interest, that he feels compelled to relinquish what has been to him throughout a labour of love. Probably, the most important business awaiting the new Committee will be the selection of someone able to worthily fill the office thus vacated.

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 Mr. W. Crowder, Mr. P. Everitt, Mr. C. B. Grant, Mr. J. Punnett, Mr. G. E. Sadd, Mr. W. C. Storey, and Mr. T. R. Wright. In addition, Mr. R. G. Hember has resigned, and Mr. O. Fitch vacates his seat on the Committee by having ceased to be a member of the Society. The members will, therefore, have to elect nine new members of the Committee and two Auditors. Nominations for the above offices must be forwarded to the Secretary (in writing) on or before February 2nd. 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 16th, at 7 p.m. precisely.

Statement of Accounts of South Place Religious Society, for the Year 1881.

D _r .		Cr.	
ORDINARY INCOME.		ORDINARY EXPENDITURE.	
Received by Treasurer.	To receive.	Paid by Treasurer.	Total for 1881.
£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
To Cash in hand 31st December, 1880	27 5 3	By Mr. Conway	500 0 0
" Seat Rents for 1881 :-	556 19 3	" Choir	134 16 0
" Received in 1880	4 0 0	" Salaries	85 15 0
" " 1881	54 12 3	" Advertisements	24 15 8
" To receive	£638 16 9	" Printing, Stationery, Pamphlets, &c.*	67 19 3
" Doubtful .. ..	.. ..	" Tuning Organ	6 0 0
		" Sundries	34 12 2
" Collections .. Books and Pamphlets	126 1 11*	" Rates, Taxes, and Insurance	23 14 9
" Paid to Mr. Conway on a/c, Sales of Books £41 19 6	48 11 9	" Coats and Gas	33 9 10
" Paid to other friends for do.	77 10 2	" Interest on Mortgage	125 6 4
		" Repairs, ordinary	13 14 2
" To pay Mr. Conway, balance for do.	10 0 0	Recovered from "Phoenix" Fire Insurance Co. .. 4 0 0.	.. ..
" Rent of House	52 10 0	Amount paid for damage by Fire	2 0 0
" Chapel Lettings	173 15 4		.. ..
		To pay as per Contra	16 14 2
" Seat Rents for 1880 :-	973 3 7		.. ..
Unpaid 31st December, 1880	17 10 0	Choir for 1880, balance due 31st December, 1880	1 5 0
Bad Debts	70 0 0	" Printing, 1880 do. do.	10 11 0
		" Tuning, 1880 do. do.	6 0 0
" Rent of House, 1880	53 11 3	" Sundries, 1880 do. do.	0 16 6
" Chapel Lettings, 1880	20 18 8	" Sale of Books, 1880, paid to friends	5 15 4
" Seat Rents for 1882	91 19 11		.. ..
		Bad Debts as per Contra	24 7 10
		
			8 12 2
EXTRAORDINARY INCOME.		EXTRAORDINARY EXPENDITURE.	
To Subscriptions to Decoration Fund :-		By Decoration of Building :-	
Unpaid 31st December, 1880	34 17 0	Owing 31st December, 1880	102 5 1
Twice reckoned	2 2 0	Extra expenditure	0 18 0
		
" Subscriptions for Painting Outside of Building	32 15 0	Short Subscribed as per Contra	103 3 1
" Advance from the Treasurer	49 18 0	Painting Outside of Building	2 0 0
" Deficit for the year 1881, viz. :-	51 14 6	New Seats, and Hymn Book a/c-balance	51 7 9
Bad Debts for 1880	8 12 2	Balance to be received for 1881	44 17 11
Short subscription to Decoration Fund	2 0 0		.. ..
			58 0 9

57 19 10					
Less Surplus on Ordinary	23 18 4			34 1 6	
Income					
		£1225 19 9	£72 2 3	£1114 2 6	

<i>Dr.</i>				<i>Cr.</i>
1881. Deficit for year 1881	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	15 16 2
				18 2 10
				33 19 0
				20 0 0
				13 19 0
				20 2 6
				<u>£34 1 6</u>

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT.

1880. Extra Receipts for 1879 received in 1880	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	15 16 2
Surplus for 1880 .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	18 2 10
Less paid off New Seats and Hymn-book A/c in 1880	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	33 19 0
1881. Dec. 31. Balance .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	20 0 0
				13 19 0
				20 2 6
				<u>£34 1 6</u>

ASSETS.

Amounts to be received for 1881	.. .. .	.. .. .	72 2 3
Less payments to be made for 1881	.. .. .	.. .. .	14 1 6
Balance on Profit and Loss to be made good *	.. .. .	.. .. .	58 0 9
			20 2 6
			<u>£78 3 3</u>

LIABILITIES.

Debt to Treasurer .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	51 14 6
Seat Rents for 1882 carried to New Year .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	26 8 9
				£78 3 3

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

<i>Dr.</i>				<i>Cr.</i>
To Collection, Nov. 21, 1881	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	74 1 8
Subscriptions .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .
Profit on Soirees .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .
Annual Soiree .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .
				£74 1 8

By Balance in hand, 31st December, 1881

BENEVOLENT FUND.

<i>Dr.</i>				<i>Cr.</i>
To Balance on 31st December, 1880	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	26 0 0
Collection on 2nd January, 1881	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	115 11 4
Special Collection and Subscription for a friend	.. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	0 19 9
				£142 11 1

By Sundry payments
 " Amount paid to friend
 " Balance in hand, 31st December, 1881

Making allowance for bad and doubtful debts, the Seat Rents for 1881 show an increase of about £37. The Ordinary Income shows an excess over the Ordinary Expenditure of £23 18s. 4d. for the year, although the Profit on Soirees has been taken out of the General Account and devoted to the redemption of the Mortgage Debt. The Treasurer has advanced £51 14s. 6d. on General Account; but the deficiency for the year is only £20 2s. 6d., against which has to be placed the fact that the entire balance of the New Seats and Hymn-book Account, viz., £44 17s. 11d., has been written off, as compared with £20 in the previous year.

Examined by us, this 21st January, 1882, and found correct.

J. A. JAYON, }
 CLARENCE H. SEYLER, } *Auditors.*

* The value of Hymn Books and Pamphlets in Stock, estimated at cost price, is about £118 7s. 1d.

