

65579

REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE
OF
SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY,
FOR THE YEAR 1879.

SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY.

1879.

Minister :

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

Committee :

Mrs. ANDERSON
Mr. E. K. BLYTH
" W. CROWDER
" E. DALLOW
" P. EVERITT
Mrs. I. FISHER
Miss C. FLETCHER
Mr. CORRIE B. GRANT
" G. HICKSON
" J. KNIGHT
" J. PUNNETT

Mr. G. E. SADD
" C. H. SEYLER
" J. SHAW
" W. C. STOREY
" J. STOUT
Mrs. T. TAYLOR
Mr. C. W. THIES
" W. D. THOMSON
" T. R. WRIGHT
" G. H. YOUNG

Treasurer and Chairman :

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

Secretary :

Mr. W. J. REYNOLDS, Elm House, Mare Street, Hackney, E.

Auditors :

Mr. A. Mc MORRAN

Mr. J. A. LYON

Trustees :

Mr. WM. 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 Sotree Committee :

Mr. S. G. FENTON, 18, Courthope Villas, Wimbledon, S.W.

Choir-Master and Organist :

Mr. J. TROUSSELLE, 7, Blandford Place, Regent's Park, N.W.

Report of the Committee
OF
SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY,
FOR THE YEAR 1879.

THE Committee, in presenting the Report for the year 1879, have not the pleasing task of chronicling such an eventful period as the preceding year proved to be. They are, however, able to record a degree of progress that is of a most satisfactory and substantial character. Indeed, our Society having now become a well known centre of liberal thought; could scarcely fail to share the gratifying advance that has been made, on all sides, in the direction of freedom of opinion. It is scarcely possible for any one who is conversant with science and literature, or who merely glances at the best periodical writing of our day, not to notice the changed aspect which the great battle for mental liberty now presents. Within the recollection of many members of this Society, the time was when heterodoxy—or anything that its opponents chose to stigmatize by that name—could hardly obtain the scantiest attention; and was compelled to adopt a tone that was apologetic, rather than outspoken or decisive. It would almost seem now, that this position is completely reversed. The furtive apology, and the cry of despair, are heard indeed; but it is from the orthodox camp that the lugubrious sounds go forth. Whether we notice the bishop, who, having as he thought, satisfactorily answered modern rationalists three years ago, finds himself “called again to the task, more urgently,

more imperatively, than before ;” and who yet finds “ that as yet it has been by no means clear where it would ultimately be most hopeful to make a decided stand ;” or whether we observe the eager manner in which anything that wears the semblance of a scientific argument, is caught up by orthodox apologists (often without any suspicion of its two-edged character) ; we are in either case forced to conclude that the contest between science and supernaturalism has entered upon an entirely new phase. We cannot but regard it as significant to the last degree, that the privileged sects feel themselves already *in extremis* ; and cannot but rejoice to find, that the weight of intellectual influence is rapidly being transferred to the side of mental freedom. It would be impossible to recount all the circumstances that lead to this conclusion ; but one of the most suggestive is furnished by the recent publication of a small volume of poems by Miss Bevington. That the progress of modern thought should call forth excellent controversial writing, was of course to be expected ; but that the new ideas, which as yesterday seemed but struggling into existence, should now be sufficiently developed to find expression in poetry, indicates that they have penetrated far more deeply into the public mind than was hitherto suspected by either friends or foes.

It must not be forgotten, however, that this progress has been chiefly attained by the efforts of some of our leading thinkers ; amongst whom the late Professor Clifford occupied an unusually prominent position. His untimely death in the early part of last year, has deprived the liberal ranks of a champion ; whose intellectual power, coupled as it was with an earnest enthusiasm for the welfare of mankind, made him a justly dreaded foe to those creeds and dogmas which he considered had become the principal obstacles to moral and religious progress. No one, perhaps, has done more to detach really useful ideas from theological incrustations, and to place

them on an altogether loftier plane ; most certainly no one ever approached his task in a more determined and uncompromising manner. Unfortunately, his busy life, and premature death, prevented anything like an adequate provision being made for those dear to him. His friends endeavoured to supply this deficiency, and by their efforts a sum of £3,000 was collected; of which sum the members of this Society contributed £95. 17s. 6d. A memorial service in honour of this true friend of humanity was held on March 16th; an impressive discourse being delivered by Mr. Conway to one of the most numerous audiences ever assembled at South Place.

The special work of this Society, led by Mr. Conway, has also, the Committee venture to think, done most useful work in advancing freedom of thought and opinion. The fearlessness, and intellectual grasp exhibited in the discourses at South Place during the past year, while giving continued pleasure and instruction to the members of our Society, are also steadily becoming appreciated by an increasing number. In illustration of this, it may be mentioned that our services have received favourable comment from the press on some recent occasions.

It has long been felt that a more frequent publication of Mr. Conway's discourses would be desirable; as it was as patent to the Committee, as it doubtless has been to the members, that most of these thoughtful and suggestive essays ought to be preserved in some permanent and accessible form. They have, however, been deterred from accomplishing this task, by the circumstance that it is necessary to publish a large number of each, in order to bring the price within reasonable limits. With the means of distribution at command, these editions could seldom be disposed of with the rapidity that was essential, and the stock of pamphlets thus accumulated unduly.* But the Committee have now

* The pamphlets now in stock number 12,648.

the pleasure to state, that this difficulty has been obviated by Mr. Conway having made a special arrangement with a new periodical, entitled *Modern Thought*, for the frequent and full publication of his lectures. This journal will be constantly on sale in the library, and as in addition to Mr. Conway's discourses, it will contain much matter of interest, it is hoped that our members will find its perusal fraught with both pleasure and profit.

The other educational work that had been begun in connection with the Society, has also been carried on with considerable energy. It will be within the recollection of the members, that a course of lectures (by Mr. Rigg) on The Theory of Perception was being delivered when the last Report was presented. These lectures were brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and were succeeded by a subsequent course of nine lectures by Mr. W. C. Coupland, on Goethe's Faust. This unusually attractive subject brought together a numerous audience, who were extremely well pleased with the very excellent manner in which the subject was handled. The profound thought, and keen knowledge of human character displayed in the masterpiece of the great German poet, are becoming better appreciated in these days of mental activity; and it was, therefore, a gratifying circumstance that our Society assisted in disseminating such interesting information on this important work, as was happily accomplished by Mr. Coupland's efforts. During the autumn, another course, on Political Economy was commenced, and is now being continued by Mr. J. H. Levy, whose masterly exposition of this important subject is closely followed by a numerous assemblage. These lectures have been initiated and sustained by a few members of this Society, the Committee having assisted them by granting the use of the building at a nominal charge. But it is a matter for consideration, whether the time has not arrived when a definite

constitution might properly be granted to the body which has carried on this work; and thus enable South Place Institute to take its place amongst the educational agencies of this City.

The Musical arrangements have received an unusual amount of attention during the past year. At the commencement of that period the Committee received, with regret, the resignation of Madame Worrell-Duval, who filled the position of first soprano in the choir. The appointment of her successor has been a somewhat difficult matter; for it was felt, that it was better to sustain the inconvenience of some frequent changes, rather than appoint any one who did not win entire and unqualified approval. During the year some additions have been made to the music, and the Music Committee are now engaged in selecting from a large number of pieces, some new Anthem Music, with a view of enlarging and improving our *repertoire*. This is being accomplished with Mr. Trousselle's able assistance, to whom the Committee feel indebted for his painstaking efforts to sustain and improve the character of our music.

In connection with musical matters, it may be stated, that a proposal was made to form a Musical Society from amongst our members; but that up to the present moment, sufficient support has not been accorded to the movement to justify a commencement. Should, however, this difficulty be surmounted, the Committee will gladly place every facility in the way of so excellent a project.

The usual series of Soirées have been held under the management of the Soirée Committee; and it perhaps hardly requires any statement to remind the members, of the many opportunities for pleasant social intercourse they have enjoyed on these occasions. The "Tableux Vivants" that were presented on one evening, formed an unusual attraction; and, the Committee think, reflected great credit on those engaged in

furnishing the entertainment. They are also of opinion, that many thanks are due to the ladies and gentlemen forming the Soirée Committee, for their arduous efforts to promote the enjoyment of the members and their friends on each evening. It is a satisfaction to be able to record that a profit has been secured amounting to £19. 16s. 11d. The Annual Soirée was held on May 3rd, at the Cannon Street Hotel, and was more than usually successful; as, in addition to the pleasure afforded, the large attendance enabled the managers to realize the substantial surplus of £11. 5s. 10d.

The lettings of the building, unfortunately, have not proved quite so remunerative as in past years; the amount received during the year having only reached £184. 2s. 6d., against £211 for the preceding year. This is the more to be regretted, as there are some repairs to the building of a rather serious character that cannot much longer be delayed. The roof has been in an unsound condition for some time past, and during the next vacation will require thorough repair. In addition to this, the Committee think it absolutely necessary for the comfort of the members, that some more efficient apparatus for warming the building should be provided as soon as it becomes possible. Unfortunately, both these matters will entail considerable expense; and the Committee were therefore compelled to seek some means of increasing the revenue, unless these necessary works were to be indefinitely postponed. Their attention had been drawn to the very unequal value of the sittings on the ground floor, by the circumstance, that, whilst some were promised in advance long before vacancies occurred, others would scarcely let at all. They therefore went carefully through the books, and revised the scale of charges for sittings, seeking to bring them more in harmony with the recognized values they appeared to have with the members. They believe that additional revenue will be obtained in two directions: first,

by the increased rental of those seats that are confessedly the most eligible ; secondly, by greater inducements being offered to obtain subscribers for those which are not so desirable. The Committee feel that in this matter they are calling upon some of the members for an effort to aid them ; but it should in fairness be remembered, that, although the seat rents at South Place may seem high, the members are not, as in all other Religious Societies, continually solicited for additional contributions. With the exception of the Benevolent Fund, the seat rent is now the only sum that is either demanded or even invited, and from it the greater part of the current expenditure has to be met. A remembrance of this will possibly aid the members in giving the Committee their help at this juncture.

In concluding the review of the labours of the year that has just elapsed, it may fairly be stated, that, while a substantial amount of success has been achieved in the past, there is also reason to hope that, with goodwill and unanimity on the part of the members, coupled with energy on the part of the Committee, still greater prosperity may reward the efforts of the future.

* * Since the drafting of the above Report, the following letter has been received from Mr. Conway, and the subject there mentioned will require the careful consideration of the future Committee. The arrangements that may be found necessary, will be communicated to the members at an early date.

“ INGLEWOOD, BEDFORD PARK,

“ TURNHAM GREEN,

“ 13th January, 1880.

“ Dear Mr. HICKSON,

“ I enclose the receipts for the year. And in doing so,
 “ I will ask you to lay before the Committee the following
 “ statement—to which they may think it important to allude in
 “ the next Annual Report.

“ It is my purpose to go to America with my family at the close of July next, and I shall require for the visit a four months’ furlough.

“ It had been my hope that my friend Octavius Frothingham, now in Italy seeking health, would be able to pass the autumn in London, knowing how highly our South Place Society would value his eloquent discourses. But by a letter just received from him, I learn with regret that his efforts to regain health have been so unsuccessful that it is impossible for him to be with our people. I doubt not, however, that the Committee, to whom I shall have to leave the task (assisting, however, as much as I can) will be able to secure the services of good men during my absence, and I trust the Society will be willing to bear the expense of such supplies.

“ I may add that I have concluded to determine my ministry at the Athenæum, which will be discontinued in June, and not resumed after my return from America. I have formed this resolution of my own accord, having discovered that it is necessary for me to husband my energies more in future. The growing requirements of South Place appear to me to need all the strength that remains to me.

“ Ever faithfully,

“ MONCURE D. CONWAY.”

N O T I C E .

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. I. Fisher, Miss Fletcher, Mr. J. Knight, Mr. C. H. Seyler, Mr. J. Shaw, Mr. J. Stout, Mr. C. W. Thies. The members will therefore have to elect seven new members of the Committee, and two Auditors. Nominations for the above offices must be forwarded to the Secretary (in writing) on or before January 29th. The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 12th, at 7.0 p.m. precisely.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, SOUTH PLACE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, FOR THE YEAR 1879.

GENERAL ACCOUNT.

Dr.	£	s.	d.	Cr.	£	s.	d.
To Seat Rents.....	604	17	6	By Mr. Conway	500	0	0
" Collections	67	9	0	" Choir	141	18	0
" Sale of Hymn Books and Pamphlets	57	12	0	" Salaries	24	14	0
" Rent of House	70	0	0	" Advertising	34	12	4
" Profit on Soirées	19	16	11	" Rates, Taxes, and Insurance	20	7	3
" " Annual Soirée	11	5	10	" Coals and Gas.....	35	8	6
" Share of Advertisements (Athenæum).....	6	0	0	" Interest on Mortgage	125	11	8
" Chapel Lettings	184	2	6	" Printing and Stationery	48	1	7
" Clifford Fund.....	95	17	6	" Sundries	36	0	6
				" Repairs.....	16	10	7
				" Tuning Organ	6	0	0
				" Clifford Fund	95	17	6
				" Balance carried to Hymn Book Account	31	19	4
	<u>£1,117</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>				

NEW SEATS AND HYMN BOOK ACCOUNT.

Balance from General Account	31	19	4
Balance due to Treasurer 31st December, 1879	64	17	11
	<u>£96</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>3</u>

BENEVOLENT FUND.

Balance in hand, January, 1879.....	24	12	4
Collection, December 28th, 1879.....	17	2	8
	<u>£41</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>
Sundry payments	16	0	0
Balance in hand, 31st December, 1879	25	15	0
	<u>£41</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>

Examined by us, this 17th January, 1880, and found correct.

ALEXR. McMORRAN, }
J. A. LYON, } *Auditors.*

The value of the stock of Hymn Books and Pamphlets, estimated at cost price, is £163. 11s. 6d.

