

**DOCTOR'S COMMONS
UNVEILED; ITS SECRETS AND
ABUSES DISCLOSED: WITH
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE REFORM
OF ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS**

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Doctor's Commons Unveiled; Its Secrets and Abuses Disclosed: With Suggestions for the Reform of Ecclesiastical Courts by Cuthbert Conyngham

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CUTHBERT CONYNGHAM

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THE REFORM OF ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS.

BY

CUTHBERT CONYNGHAM, LL.D.

"Hail! blest Retreats, where Privilege and Power
Obey one power alone,—the Love of Self."

DEDICATED TO
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PREFACE.

In these times of change and excitement, and at a moment when every thing relating to legislative interference with Ecclesiastical testamentary Jurisdiction is regarded with interest, it is conceived that no apology is required for submitting the following pages to the public. Our single aim is truth ; our arguments will rise out of, and our representations of Doctors' Commons constitute,—an assemblage of facts incontrovertible. Those “stubborn things,” therefore, enable us to appeal with confidence to the invincible reformer of abuses, public opinion.

It has been said that the Ecclesiastical Courts having been already tried and condemned, we have done with their abuses, and that it now becomes an exclusive duty to direct attention to such radical remedies as may be imperatively needed. True, we may labour under the impression that we have done

with the abuses, but have they, indeed, done with us ? No, they still exist in all their rank offensiveness, and if not further agitated, will be apt to settle down, enveloped in an obscuring cloud of vapour very favourable to their continuance.

An attempt will, therefore, be made in these pages to exhibit, as briefly as the subject permits, the most prominent and systematic abuses of Doctors' Commons, without alluding to many minor evils which have occasionally been touched upon by other writers, and which still flourish in the privileged precincts we are now approaching. In prosecuting this task we shall "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." Certain remedies, chiefly confined to principles, will be afterwards suggested, and we trust it will be shewn that the benefits which would arise from the application of these remedies, would be numerous and permanent.

Many individuals, more or less distinguished, have publicly discussed and offered their views upon the present subject ; suggestions have been made, some of them impossible in practice, others possible, but fraught with danger ; many able persons have failed to apprehend or, at least, to present safe and judicious ideas regarding this subject. Bill after Bill, although prepared

by experienced legal practitioners, has broken down, and many more bills, it may be anticipated, will yet break down in succession. Should, therefore, our plan pass unheeded, we shall remember that plans of reform more elaborate have also passed away, and the fact that, at worst, we shall subsist in respectable company, will be to us a sufficient consolation.

With these observations this little book is committed to a just and discerning public ; if it be instrumental in conveying but one useful hint, the author will gladly accept that as his reward, and it will not have been written wholly in vain. Nor ought it to be forgotten that every important addition to the information already possessed by the legislature, in reference to the Ecclesiastical Courts, must tend to assist their deliberations, influence their measures, and thus render a national service.

Oxford, Jan. 24th, 1854.

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