

The MONTHLY RECORD

Vol. 67, No. 1

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Sixpence

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SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

SUNDAY MORNING MEETINGS AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK

January 7—**DR. JOHN LEWIS, M.A.**

Is Progress Inevitable?

Piano Solos by **JOYCE LANGLEY**

January 14—**O. R. MCGREGOR, B.Sc.**

The Social Costs of Broken Homes

Bass Solos by **G. C. DOWMAN**

January 21—**VADAKKAN V. ALEXANDER, B.A.**

The Crisis of Religion in Modern India

Soprano Solo by **PAMELA WOOLMORE**

Hindu Song ("Sadko")

Rimsky-Korsakov

January 28—**LORD CHORLEY, M.A., J.P.**

Voluntary Euthanasia

Piano Solos by **FREDERIC JACKSON**

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January 21—**WANG STRING QUARTET**

Haydn in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5; Schubert in E flat, Op. 87;

Beethoven in A minor, Op. 132

January 28—**ALLEGRI STRING QUARTET**

Haydn in G minor, Op. 54, No. 1; Beethoven in F, Op. 18, No. 1;

Brahms in A minor, Op. 5, No. 2

The Objects of the Society are the study and dissemination of ethical principles and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment.

Any member in sympathy with these objects is cordially invited to become a Member (minimum annual subscription is 12s. 6d.), or Associate (minimum annual subscription 7s. 6d.). Life membership £13 2s. 6d. Associates are not eligible to vote or hold office. Enquiries should be made to the Registrar to whom subscriptions should be paid.

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Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1

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The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the Society.

EDITORIAL

WE HAVE PRINTED a further obituary notice of Archibald Robertson. This one, by our Secretary, Mr. J. Hutton Hynd, which came too late for our last issue, reveals much of what the Society felt about a greatly respected lecturer and writer. We also publish a report of the memorial meeting held at Oxford on November 27.

A seemingly austere man, Robertson was not always seen as the kindly man he undoubtedly was. Our personal contacts with him were of the most cordial description and his practical help and efficiency were almost legendary.

G.B.S.

The Shavian usually contains an item which is most arresting, and the current issue is no exception, for there is a reprint of notes delivered at a lecture at the New Reform Club, London, March 21, 1912, entitled "Modern Religion, by Bernard Shaw". It is too long for us to quote in full, yet we may be permitted to notice what we might call an echo of the Bradlaugh Commemoration Meeting to which we referred last month.

Shaw said: "Twenty or thirty years ago, when Parliament in an extreme state of piety, was violently assaulting Charles Bradlaugh for being an atheist, and refusing to allow him to contaminate the saintly people at St. Stephens, I took every opportunity of calling myself an atheist publicly." Shaw took exception to "people who held the same opinion as myself and persisted in calling themselves agnostics".

"You know perfectly well," he said, "that what is called God by people who are throwing Bradlaugh downstairs does not exist, never did and never will; and even if you are afraid of the term, nevertheless you ought to stand up and say at least you are on Bradlaugh's side—that you are very much nearer to his beliefs than to the superstitions of his assailants."

Shaw and the N.S.S.

After the death of Bradlaugh, Shaw was invited to address the National Secular Society at the Hall of Science. He chose for his subject "Progress in Free Thought".

"Some thought," he said, "their secularism the final term of the human intellect, and felt that the man who, having got there and wanted to progress still further, must be the Arch Atheist of all creation. I had an extremely pleasant evening. I do not think it would have been possible for Bradlaugh to have thrown the most bigoted audience of Plymouth Brethren into such transports of rage as I did the Freethinkers at the Hall of Science. . . . I warned them that if any of them fell into the hands of a moderately intelligent Jesuit—not that I have ever met one—he could have turned them inside out."

Omnipotence and Benevolence

The Christians themselves must be tired of attempting to reconcile these two supernatural qualities but let us read Shaw on this topic. "James Mill and John Stuart Mill and their circle used to say there is no God; but this is a family secret. . . . It is very easy to get sentimental about a God of love, but it is not so easy to get sentimental about a God of cancer and epilepsy."

The present number of *The Shavian* is well worth reading, if for this article alone.

Notes by Custos

A GREAT DISCUSSION has been raging about morals in general and particularly those of the young in particular. It was initiated in *The Times* by the Rev. Dr. Leslie Weatherhead who attacked contemporary moral standards, talked much of broken homes and illegitimacy, venereal disease and promiscuity, and then went on to suggest it was immorality which brought about the downfall of the Roman Empire. We are, he claims, in a post-Neroian stage ourselves! The worthy pastor opened the floodgates of correspondence. One enlightened gentleman blamed the whole situation upon the "emancipation of women"! A clergyman with a grain of common sense called attention to the high rate of bastardy shown in old Baptismal registers only to be rebuked by a brother-cleric who pointed out that the lower statistics of today were probably due to the discovery of contraceptive techniques. A lady wanted the sale of contraceptives forbidden to persons under eighteen years of age, apparently overlooking the futility of the law restricting the sale of cigarettes. Finally, the discussion surged over into the Convocation of Canterbury where various bishops expressed their concern. We are perturbed, for we wonder whether we are now going to be panicked into

some sort of repressive legislation possibly accompanied by an attempt to tighten up religious education.

All of the correspondents seemed to assume that religious belief and moral observance go hand-in-hand. Several comments are possible. In the case of Dr. Weatherhead, we are aware that this sort of claptrap goes down well at the City Temple among the sort of people who form the congregation. But he gives himself away with his historical references. It is mere nonsense to say that Rome fell because of immorality. The bulk of the writers tied up morality with establishmentarianism and thus showed that they feared the sexual nonconformist because he dissents to this degree from the accepted form and is therefore a discordant factor within the social pattern. None seemed honest enough to point out that Roman Catholicism in this country provides a proportion of the jail population out of all proportion to its numbers or that the majority of criminals, sexual and otherwise, have some form of religious belief.

Dr. Argyle, in his book *Religious Behaviour*, produced important statistical reasons for asserting that actual social behaviour has little to do with dogmatic belief. Historians of the quality of Rattray Taylor give sound grounds for thinking that the moral pattern has changed rather than degenerated. We doubt whether there are anything like as many prostitutes in London today as there were in the London of Michael Sadleir's novels. The court of Charles II or the age of Defoe reminds us of a society where the Archbishop of Canterbury was, according to Pepys, "a notorious wencher" and where the courtesan was common. Victorianism had plenty of room for the *sub rosa* mistress and merely made a demand for a rigid outward conformity. Child-prostitution was common, a fact forgotten by those who raise up their voices today about degeneracy. Marriage had been reduced to a semi-commercial bargain and its status lowered. If we look at the situation today, we see a great deal of free discussion and a healthy rejection of the rigidity of artificial Victorian middle-class standards. It is worth remembering that the present statistics of venereal disease are far below those of the wartime scare.

Historically, we are driven to the conclusion emphasised in past years by Joseph McCabe that the morality deplored by Dr. Weatherhead is by no means as low or as vicious as was that engendered by centuries of Christian civilisation. Incidentally, we have no confidence in some of Dr. Weatherhead's supporters. The Rev. A. P. Thornton-Duesbury of Oxford, a Moral Re-Armament figure, says that only 30 per cent of the women going down from the university have retained their virginity. How does Mr. Thornton-Duesbury know? Are his figures the result of statistical research based upon sound evidence or the result of over-heated imagination? A moral pattern is the product of the social and economic background of a particular society. The disintegration today is a disintegration of the moral codes created by high capitalism as this order passes into decline. Yet this economic order with its outgrowths is the creed of the "establishment" and its passing cannot fail to rouse a series of dirges from this quarter.

CUSTOS

Archibald Robertson: An Appreciation

IT WAS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE, as Secretary of the Society, to have regular, but not merely routine, exchange of letters with Archibald Robertson during his later years as one of our appointed lecturers. In our exchanges there was an awareness of being in personal partnership in a great enterprise—in an activity which we together took very seriously. Serious though he was, he

enjoyed the challenge of the frequent address to be given at Conway Hall—the choice of a subject, the selection of a title (as brief as possible), the preparation and delivery of the discourse, to be outlined later in brief for *The Monthly Record*. And was there a “remainder”, from his family inheritance, which seemed to give him particular satisfaction in conducting the Sunday morning meeting entirely on his own—even to the announcing of the opening hymn?

It is with true appreciation that we recall the carefully-prepared and scholarly addresses (always on matters of moment about which he had thought and felt deeply), by means of which he made his own effective appeal to the intelligence and will of his hearers. His forthrightness, and his consistent integrity of thought and feeling, brought the issues under discussion to the point—so often to the sharpest point—and stirred the mind and moral sense of so many who were privileged to hear him over a period of fifteen years or so.

And Archibald Robertson's presence in itself brought a special quality of distinction and depth to every occasion of his attendance at our meetings and social gatherings. This was markedly the case at our Annual Reunion in September, when his many friends and colleagues were more than delighted to see him, and to hear his gracious response to the chairman's warm welcome extended to him and to Mrs. Robertson. It will not be forgotten that although in failing health, he, with Mrs. Robertson, made a special effort to come all the way from Oxford in order to meet with members and friends in happy informality, and to wish the Society good success at the beginning of another season.

At the Annual Reunion (and significantly, we may say, in recent articles in *The Monthly Record*) Mr. Robertson made pointed reference to the fact that he had never been, by his own commitment, a member of the South Place Ethical Society—because he had never found himself to be in complete agreement with the Society's comprehensive and sympathetic approach to religion. He never disguised his own personal and complete renunciation of “religion”; he did not wish to have the term applied to him in any shape or form. For himself, he preferred the cultivation of an anti-religious sentiment. But although the Society could not wholly agree with his point of view, the invitation to deliver his lectures was given in good faith, and accepted by him in good faith; and it can be said that he did not abuse the privilege implied in the invitation and the acceptance. He knew quite plainly what the Society stood for, and so he did not, because he felt he could not, become a member. Since (as he thought) he could not “come in by the door”, he would not “climb over the wall”. He did not wish it even so much as to *seem* that he was working against the religious traditions and professions of the Society, from the inside, as a member. We should be grateful to have before us at this time the memory of an example such as this, brought so vividly to light in the deceased's last words to us, even in the shadow of death.

It is with profound regret that we realise now that Archibald Robertson will not be heard again at Conway Hall; but his influence will remain firmly as a part of “the story of South Place”, and among us as the memory of one who was held in affection and high esteem, and who contributed so much to our common fellowship.

J. H. H.

Archibald Robertson Memorial

A MEMORIAL MEETING in honour of the late Archibald Robertson was held on Monday, November 27, in the Union Debating Hall, Oxford. Mr. Hector Hawton represented the Rationalist Press Association Ltd. and the

South Place Ethical Society. Mr. R. Palme Dutt, Editor of the *Labour Monthly* and vice-chairman of the Communist Party, and Mr. Jack Dunman paid eloquent tributes to the political side of Robertson's career. He devoted himself unsparingly to the causes in which he sincerely believed and gained the admiration and respect of all who were actively associated with him. Although his individual existence might be ended, said Mr. Dutt, he lived on in the influence of the writings which survived him.

Mr. Hawton said that he first made Robertson's acquaintance at an R.P.A. Conference in Oxford. During the next few years, as secretary of the South Place Ethical Society, Mr. Hawton met Robertson regularly and their friendship ripened. Then they became fellow directors of the R.P.A. and established a new relationship as author and publisher. This continued until ill-health forced Robertson to retire from active life, though he still continued to write for *The Humanist*. His last contribution was a translation from a Soviet journal. It was a surprise to find that he had taught himself Russian, but characteristic of his modesty that he had never previously mentioned the fact.

"He never tried to make political capital out of his association with us," Mr. Hawton said. "He kept loyally within the area of common ground. In our personal relationship he sometimes showed a side that was not so apparent on the platform. He was an extremely sensitive man, and that is perhaps why some people felt he was rather aloof. His sensitiveness showed itself by the use of a pseudonym in his writings until the death of his father. It is, after all, a painful embarrassment to a dignitary of the Church of England to find his son writing for rationalist and socialist publications—more so before the war than nowadays. Robertson was scrupulous in this respect that he was even a pseudonymous director of the R.P.A. from 1926 to 1932.

"I might also mention his love of literature, for he was no dry-as-dust rationalist. He was particularly fond of Catullus and Lucretius, whom he translated. I have just seen a copy of the Chronicle of the Prep School he attended in Bournemouth. It records that in 1899 Robertson gained the top Winchester Scholarship, the Blue Ribbon of the Public School field, although he was a year under the maximum age limit. In offering this brilliant boy congratulations, the headmaster added: 'His future career will be closely watched and his future successes duly written in the Chronicles of the Old Boys.' From Winchester Robertson won a scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford, and he gained a First in Greats. Then he went to the Admiralty where he remained until 1931.

"Even in his schooldays he rebelled against the traditional beliefs in which he had been brought up. Belfort Bax converted him to socialism and republicanism, but one of the influences that led him to atheism was Shelley's *Queen Mab*. His taste for poetry did not atrophy, as the opponents of rationalism sometimes claim must happen if we put too much trust in reason. It is typical of the range of his sympathies that he once told me that although he abhorred Newman's theology he was very fond of *The Dream of Gerontius*.

"I have lost a good companion and a staunch friend. The R.P.A. has lost one of its best authors and a stalwart champion. Of the many qualities he possessed the one that is perhaps the most outstanding was integrity. He was incorruptible. He feared nothing except the lunacy that threatened the world with nuclear annihilation. When I last saw him he knew that he had not much longer to live—but it was not on his own account that he was anxious. Indeed, if he had ever consulted his own selfish interests, he would have taken a very different direction."

At the conclusion of the meeting Mrs. Sylvia Robertson thanked the

speakers and all who had attended to pay tribute to her late husband. She had provided a display of Robertson's books, including many translations into Russian, Czech, Italian and Chinese. It was gratifying to see that the Oxford University Humanist Group was represented in the hall where, as an undergraduate, Archibald Robertson himself had often taken part in debates.

Abraham Lincoln

BY

G. I. BENNETT

IN THE PREFACE to the translated edition of his fascinating study of Abraham Lincoln, Emil Ludwig confesses for him "a personal sympathy which I have never felt so strongly for any other great man in history". "I see him," he writes, "like one of Shakespeare's characters, absolutely original, comparable to none, immeasurably unique."

It was on March 4, 1861, that he assumed leadership of a nation that was plunged into storm. Four years later he was dead, cut down suddenly, brutally, tragically, at the height of a chequered and extraordinary career. In the years since, his reputation, which then stood so high, has grown even more, and there is today no better known, better esteemed figure than he in the whole of history. And yet had he not married a woman intensely ambitious for his success, he would very likely have remained in obscurity. For what G. K. Chesterton once said of Lincoln is perfectly true. "He was," he wrote, "one of the world's failures who happened to succeed. Nothing in Lincoln's character or in the course of his life suggested that he was destined to play any notable, let alone incalculable, part in the affairs of men."

He was born of humble parents in 1809 in a log cabin in the then wild borden country of Kentucky. Later, the family moved to Indiana in search of richer pastures; but poverty pursued them. For years Abraham lived an incredibly crude and spartan life, with too few clothes to keep him warm in winter and not enough of the right kind of food to nourish his body. He had hardly any education. His father, an uncouth and illiterate pioneer as he was, didn't believe in it. Why should his son waste his time in school? He was much better employed working on his land, and there were plenty of jobs for him to do. In later life Lincoln calculated that, if all his irregular attendances at the primitive backwoods schools had been put together, they would amount to no more than a year's education. And so, from the time that he was strong enough to use his hands, young Abraham was helping his father to make forest clearings, fell trees, chop logs, and plough the soil. Later he was by turns river boatman, country store-keeper, village postman and postmaster, and land surveyor. But in his late twenties he had made no mark in life. He had failed in running his own store, and this left him heavily in debt. He had served four not very notable years in the Illinois legislature, which in those days was a rough-and-ready assembly of men, to be sure. It was not until he tried his hand at law in Springfield, a small mid-western town, that he met with a measure of success. But an extraordinary lawyer he must have been. We read that, in those early days, he was untidy and unmethodical, his boots frequently unbrushed, his clothes ill-fitting, his umbrella tied up with string, his office slovenly, and his notes and letters often misplaced. On his desk he kept a large envelope, containing an assortment of unfiled papers, on which he had written, "When you can't find it anywhere else, look in this". He also had the eccentricity of carrying documents inside his great stove-pipe hat. And on one occasion a legal colleague's letter went unanswered for several days because he had put it

inside his old hat and, buying a new one meanwhile, had lost sight of it temporarily.

Lincoln was well known for the modesty of his fees. He often, his fellow-lawyers thought, charged too little; and sometimes he preferred to forgo the money rather than act for a person whom he believed to be in the wrong. To a prospective client he wrote, "I could win your case and get the 600 dollars for you. But if I did so, I should bring misfortune upon an honest family, and I can't see my way to it. I would rather get along without your case and your fee." And when a man of whose criminality he was certain sought his help, Lincoln handed the case over to a colleague saying, "This man is guilty, I can't defend him. You can." He was not being pharisaic. But because he was incapable of artifice himself, he just never learnt the art of defending convincingly a man whom he knew to be dishonest and crooked.

Through Lincoln's life ran much personal unhappiness, a source of which was his marriage to Mary Todd, daughter of a wealthy Kentucky banker. An inordinately ambitious young woman, she said she intended marrying the man who would become President of the United States. Was it her social grace, her dainty vivacity, her easy polished talk, her flattering attentions, that attracted the dark, lanky backwoodsman, with his gaunt rugged face and deep-set brooding eyes that could look so sad? Providentially for America, but unfortunately for him, he became her suitor and eventual husband. He had qualities entirely opposite to hers. He was so withdrawn within himself, slow in movement and thought, and awkward of mien. He spoke with a country accent, and frequently said or did things in company that outraged the proprieties of the gentle-born and stung Mary to bitter reproaches. He couldn't help his rough edge, his *gaucherie*, his lack of *savoir faire*, poor fellow. But Mary, on the other hand, couldn't curb her annoyance, her anger, her hot words. Worst of all, she was a woman who nagged. Many were the times that her husband went unusually early to the office or stayed unusually late there, where at least Mary's carping and scolding did not penetrate. He was a man who yearned for understanding and affection and yet found it not in his home. So often did he go to hear a woman singer that people teased him about it and shook their heads warningly. "Oh, leave me alone," he said. "She's the only woman who ever says nice things to me."

In a sense, it is strange that Lincoln's ultimate fame was to a large extent due to the urgings of his wife. His early sallies into politics were not conspicuously successful. Left to himself, he might well have returned to his law practice, from which political issues had distracted him, and ended his days as an undistinguished small-town lawyer, jogging along a congenial path far from the feverish centres of human affairs. But Mary jerked him out of his easy-going life. She spurred him to political aspiration. She saw in him a potential greatness of which he was hardly conscious. How otherwise would she have dared entertain the idea, the hope, that her husband would one day be called to the White House in Washington?

It was the Negro slavery issue that first brought Lincoln into political prominence. From the depths of his being he felt slavery to be a great wrong, and he said so. It was a scourge from which, sooner or later, America must be cleansed. But Lincoln was never an extremist. He was an advocate of eliminating slavery by degrees, and making compensation to the slave-owners for their loss! Gradually he won favour with the newly-formed Republican Party, which stood against the extension of slavery in the American states, and finally he became its leader.

Now a Congressman called Stephen Douglas was at this time the leader

of the Democratic Party. Eloquent, ambitious, full of persuasive charm, this man succeeded in repealing what was known as the Missouri Compromise of 1820. By this Compromise, the state of Missouri was granted admittance to the American Union as a slave state, but only on the understanding that there must be no further extension of slavery in the free states, and those then being pioneered. Douglas took the line that the slave-opposing North had no right to lay down the law thus limiting slavery. It was, he said, an unwarrantable interference with the liberty and independence of the various states. Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of public debates upon this issue. It was a daring thing to do in view of Douglas's political reputation and brilliant platform ability. But Lincoln was above all else an honest man with profound convictions by which he was prepared to stand or fall. "I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people," he said. "They are just what we should be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist among them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist among us, we should not instantly give it up. . . . In his (Senator Douglas's) view, the question whether a new country shall be slave or free is a matter of as utter indifference as it is whether his neighbour shall plant his farm with tobacco or stock it with horned cattle. . . . The great mass of mankind take a totally different view. They consider slavery a great moral wrong; and their feelings against it is not evanescent, but eternal. It lies at the very foundation of their sense of justice, and it cannot be trifled with."

It was beautifully put in plain forceful English of which Lincoln was now becoming master, and he caught the mood of the people. He more than held his own with Douglas, and the Republican Party, greatly impressed, and looking for a candidate for the 1860 Presidency, finally chose him as its man. He was opposed by Douglas for the Democrats. Douglas's undoing was his political opportunism. He had shown himself not opposed to the extension of slave-owning if it would gain him political advantage. But this was the issue over which his own party was divided. Douglas sought to buy influential friends and their circle of voters by promising them government posts in the event of his election. Lincoln bribed no one. In homely, unpretending language, and at times with curious turns of speech, he put the matter with unmistakable forthrightness. Many thought, he said, that Senator Douglas would be the future President of the United States. "They have seen in his round, jolly, fruitful face post offices, land offices, marshalships, cabinet appointments, chargeships, and foreign missions bursting and sprouting out in wonderful exuberance, ready to be laid hold of by their greedy hands. . . . On the contrary, nobody has ever expected me to be President. In my poor, lean, lank face, nobody has ever seen that any cabbages were sprouting out. These are disadvantages . . . that the Republicans labour under. *We* have to fight this battle upon principle, and upon principle alone." It was during this campaign that he came out with those now famous words addressed to Douglas: "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

Who are the Materialists Today?

BY

Dr. JOHN LEWIS

IF WE ASK WHAT MATERIALISM IS, we must set it in the framework of our modern ideology. Here we find four main contending philosophies: materialism, idealism, dualism and evolutionary naturalism. Materialism is generally taken to mean the reduction of all experience and all phenomena

to atoms in motion. On this view all the "higher" phenomena are held to be "nothing but" chemical and physical interactions. It is doubtful whether there are any materialists of this sort, or even whether there ever were any; but even as a speculative enterprise it has its significance.

Its strength is that it resolutely excludes the supernatural and indeed all entities and forces that cannot be comprehended within the system of nature. And, again, it insists that the basic substance of nature is physical, so that from this everything must be derived.

Its weakness is that it denies the obvious. In the interests of its own theory it does less than justice to the realities of the mental and spiritual worlds. The behaviourist denies that there is a mental world! The old-fashioned materialists balk at the word "spiritual".

Whitehead has pointed out that these basic physical elements are themselves abstractions of a very high order, and that concrete reality is immensely rich, and certainly contains mental and spiritual elements, not to speak of the phenomena of living organisms.

The older materialism has the paradoxical effect of bringing into existence the very thing it wishes to destroy. So absurd is it to deny the rich world of human ethical, mental and aesthetic experience that if we are assured that it cannot be allowed any reality from a scientific standpoint, then people begin to say, very well, then there must be a separate spiritual reality, a spiritual substance which descends upon dead matter and adds to it that which matter itself is incapable of producing. We cannot help believing in far more things than the merely physical, but if this is not part of nature then we must accept the supernatural in order to explain it.

The opposite philosophy to materialism is idealism which holds that matter has no existence, and that what we suppose to be material is really mental in essence, consisting either of ideas in our minds or in the mind of the eternal, or even as spiritual entities which the mind in some mysterious way lays hold of.

The strength of this view is that at least it does justice to the spiritual life. Its weakness is that of course it cannot be justified intellectually and today ranks as an unverifiable and therefore unacceptable speculative hypothesis.

The third philosophy is dualism which accepts the reality of both body and mind and tries hard to believe, contrary to all reason, that they interact. It is the philosophy most generally held and is found also among all primitive people. It can be called animism, for it believes that a purely spiritual substance animates dead matter. It is philosophically absurd and need not detain us, except once again to note that it is a kind of position one is forced into because the alternative philosophies—materialism and idealism are even more objectionable.

The last of these philosophies I call evolutionary naturalism. It is the theory that in the course of evolution we have the emergence at different levels of higher and higher types of phenomena—first life and then mind and, with the mental, all the richness of human experience. This philosophy regards life as the behaviour and function of matter when organised in proteins and protoplasm. Matter in one form of organisation has certain properties; in a more complex form it has quite new properties—those of living organisms. At one stage matter is organised to be living, at a higher stage still, when organised as the cells of the human brain, it is organised to think. Thought is not a stuff but a function. The cutting of a knife is not a stuff, it is something the knife does when it is sharp. Thinking is what the brain *does*. What sight is to the eye, thought is to the brain.

Philosophy of this sort escapes the errors of both a "nothing but" materialism and also of idealism and dualism. It can accept the whole

range of mental, moral and spiritual values. It holds that the physical is the indispensable basis of the higher, but the higher is as real in its own right as the colour of the rainbow, the metabolism of a living cell or the drive of a living organism to maintain its own being.

The appearance of thought brings into existence the conscious control of human life and the responsibility that goes with it. With knowledge the older determinism of the unconscious molecules goes. Knowledge is freedom—freedom to choose a goal and to find the means to achieve it. Sartre rightly pointed out that the full realisation of this freedom may well cause us to feel a new and almost intolerable anxiety. That may be so, but it is also our privilege and our greatness, and we should welcome it—not run away from it.

(Summary of a discourse delivered on October 29.)

The Freedom From Hunger Campaign

THE HUMANIST AND ETHICAL MOVEMENT is being urged from many sides to take a more active interest in practical social affairs, and a number of approaches are being developed. One particular field—that of world hunger—not only appeals to our basic human feeling, but also raises important social questions of the type with which Humanists have traditionally concerned themselves.

The campaign was initiated by B. R. Sen, the present Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, with the object of satisfying the basic human need of a high proportion of the world's population. It certainly ought to be possible to do this with modern scientific and technical knowledge and research techniques, but organised effort will be necessary to achieve results quickly, and numerous obstacles of a social or psychological nature may stand in the way of change where change seems advantageous.

The campaign is concerned not with temporary measures to alleviate hunger, which the offering of agricultural surpluses from areas like North America would be, but with a long-term solution—and this means increasing the food-producing capacity of the under-fed areas themselves.

In this country, the first phase of the campaign will be educational—informing the general public about the need and how it could be fulfilled—and then about June 1962 a National appeal will be launched. A number of projects are being prepared by the United Kingdom Committee of the campaign, as it is felt that there will be more interest and value in the work if each effort is linked to a particular job or community in the field. Voluntary organisations are also being invited to work on projects of their own within the campaign, and the Humanist Council through the sub-committee it has set up is working out some which the Humanist movement might undertake.

However, the purely educational phase is the one which is to involve the public for the next seven or eight months, and we have to consider our part in increasing the general understanding of the situation at least in some of its complexity. This involves not only the effects of disease and debility, and primitive agricultural methods, but also effects of the social systems, with the presence of landlords, money-lenders, social and religious customs and taboos as possible snags to be overcome or circumvented. That they are not insuperable is shown by work already being done in some parts of the world, but they may offer very serious resistance in other places.

Another factor is the increase in population, which if carried on would certainly nullify any progress made. The cause is known—the use of im-

proved medical treatment and drugs has reduced infant mortality, while the birth-rate has not decreased in proportion. Methods of control used in the West are expensive and not necessarily suitable for underdeveloped countries. In India, however, sterilisation of adults after a number of children have been born is found to be effective and to have prospects of acceptance by the people.

Humanists will almost instinctively feel that religious customs and the population question are their special concern, and may want to take them up to the exclusion of other aspects. However, it can be argued that there are grave dangers in this, and there is a feeling that it would be better policy to stress that the approach to Freedom from Hunger should be as comprehensive as possible and embrace all relevant factors—among which we would list the two mentioned above, but in proper perspective. It has also been argued that attention to the population question would take longer to have an effect than attention to food production, and this could be borne in mind.

Other very important considerations are that the independence of the people helped should be increased rather than diminished, that they should not be approached in such a way that their human dignity is offended, and that the urge to improve their position must ultimately come from themselves—though that urge may be fostered and encouraged. The relative positions of helper and helped are also largely historical accidents and may well be reversed in the future. Those helped might also be assisted—as and when they are ready—in their understanding of the interrelationships of the factors in their situation, so that some sort of rationally ordered scheme of things is built up.

The above, of course, are not considerations peculiar to the topic of this article, they could all equally well apply in education, for example; and in this field as elsewhere they would be subject to modification in the light of experience. Nevertheless, they are nearer the centre of the Humanist position than that of most if not all religions, and Humanists have a special right to proclaim them.

By joining in this campaign, the Humanist and Ethical movement would be expressing its feeling for humanity, it would be helping to develop a balanced rational outlook, and might even gain the name of action! Even more important, many people might be able to lead better and happier lives as a result.

Any readers who would be prepared to do some work for the campaign—whether speaking, or helping with the appeal later on—are invited to write to the author of this article, c/o Conway Hall; as are any who would be interested in joining a group to study some of its many implications.

P. R. CRELLIN

Conway Discussions

ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, Mr. Richard Clements spoke on "Old Age in the New World." He reminded his audience that he had spoken on this subject at Conway Hall on two previous occasions. He welcomed the present opportunity to give further thought to the subject.

The date chosen for the meeting was most timely, for it was in the years of the Second World War that public opinion awoke to the piteous plight of an increasing number of elderly people. Their lot had, of course, been worsened by war-time conditions, and action had had to be taken on their behalf by the Statutory and voluntary bodies. For example, the National Old People's Welfare Council, one of the associated groups of the National Council of Social Service, was set up in 1940, and had therefore come of age

this year. Its first Chairman was the late Miss Eleanor Rathbone, of Liverpool, one of the most distinguished women of her time. The Council, in co-operation with a nationwide network of old people's welfare committees, continued to serve as a focus of national effort in this field. The reports and other publications issued by the Council had helped to educate opinion and led to constructive social action throughout this country.

What, Mr. Clements asked, was to be the future of elderly people in our society? He gladly paid tribute to the work of both Statutory and voluntary social services in the post-war period, and he hoped that they would be strengthened and extended in the coming years. At the same time, he felt bound to add that a much greater national effort was needed. Let them consider for a moment the size of the problem. Twenty-one years ago there had been about 5,500,000 people of pensionable age; in 1961 there are 7,500,000; and it is estimated that by 1980 there would be 9,500,000. Thus they would see that men and women in the pensionable age group constituted a large, increasing and important section of the community. There was clearly a need for a national programme that would ensure for this group an equitable share in the nation's income, more and better housing accommodation, proper medical and nursing care, and more adequate services to meet the cultural and leisure-time needs of retired people. On this last point Mr. Clements again called attention to Mr. Brian Groombridge's admirable report.*

In the light of the resources of what is nowadays called "the affluent society", Mr. Clements said, it could not be argued that a just or wise employment of our resources was being made. Too much was wasted on preparation for war, on ostentatious private spending, the building of luxury flats and offices, and the disgusting gambling and speculation by demoralised elements in the population. Against this picture of irresponsible social conduct, let them now consider what planning and action were really called for in a society determined to remain free, democratic and progressive. He thought that the kind of action needed had been indicated by Professor Richard M. Titmuss in his pamphlet, *The Irresponsible Society*,† where he wrote: ". . . We are only just beginning to see that the problem of raising the level of living, the quality of education, housing, the medical care of the poorest third of the nation calls for an immense amount of social inventiveness; for new institutional devices, new forms of co-operation, social control, ownership and administration, and new ways of relating the citizen and consumer to services that intimately concern him. *Social ideas may well be as important in Britain in the next half-century as technological innovations.*"

How bitterly disappointing had been our failure, especially in the past ten years, to achieve a broad, humane and just social policy was now daily being borne in upon the public mind! Mr. Clements said he could not help thinking that "the affluent society" had given most to those least in need. That was surely wrong in principle. Thus the better-off third of the population, as was being constantly reported in the press, had had loaded on to them by their firms pensions, tax-free lump-sum payments, compensation for loss of office, expense account privileges, life assurance, school fees, luxury housing, and in the last Budget heavy remissions of taxation at the expense of the community.

Professor Titmuss, in the pamphlet already quoted, says: "Fringe welfare, as it is so charmingly called, rises very steeply with income. The cost per employee for staff pension schemes, for example, exceeds that for work pension schemes by about 700 per cent. Tax-free lump sums on retirement run

* See *Education and Retirement*, by Brian Groombridge. The National Institute of Adult Education. London, 1960. 8s. 6d.

† P. 10. Published by the Fabian Society. Price 2s. 6d.

from £100 at the bottom to £40,000 or more at the top. Such ratios would seem high in the U.S.S.R. What is now developing rapidly is the provision of private medical care and sickness insurance as a fringe benefit, aided by tax concessions and other devices."

One was bound, Mr. Clements added, to ask: On what principle of equity could the creation by groups of industrialists of a private welfare state for their own executives and other favoured employees be justified? Particularly when one reflected on the fact that it was done at the expense of the community? Further, was it just or ethical to allow two such different standards of living to be erected in the community of retired persons?

It would be for the electors, Parliament and the trade unions to consider whether the time had come for a drastic revision of the customary practices of retirement, and allied with such reforms a National Superannuation Scheme providing an adequate pension to all employees on retirement. Meanwhile, could a lead not be given by representatives of the employers, trade unions, local authorities, and social service agencies to set up inquiry committees into questions of retirement and pensions? What did the rank and file employers and employees think on this subject? Action on these lines, Mr. Clements thought, might infuse vitamins into the rather sluggish bloodstream of democracy in our time.

He concluded by saying that in face of the clear need to better the incomes and living conditions of elderly people, charity was no substitute for social justice. Adequate pensions, housing and other accommodation must be provided, together with social services and cultural amenities. Then, too, elderly people, in common with all the rest of our citizens, had a responsibility to help society to get its thinking about old age on to right lines. In our plans they must not be left out of the picture. The welfare of elderly people in contemporary society, he believed, depended upon a partnership of effort that included the public social services, the voluntary agencies and the people themselves. The art of modern social work in this field involved more than merely doing things *for* old people; what was of primary importance was to find ways of doing things *with* them.

ATTITUDES TO YOUTH

ON OCTOBER 31 Mr. Paul Crellin opened a discussion on "Attitudes to Youth", which was chosen because the speaker thought the attitudes young people detect in those around them are of profound importance. The young are often very sensitive and perceptive observers, particularly of the emotional state of the elders they meet, and what they do is largely a response or reaction—sometimes immediate but often delayed—to adult attitudes.

Attitudes in general might be classified into those which result from emotional conditioning, which might be called irrational or non-rational; and those based on some rational scheme.

The emotional type may be formed without conscious thought as a result of accumulated experience which has not been reflected upon—particularly those experiences associated with strong feelings. In such cases, there may be a tendency to ignore or forget anything with an unpleasant association—and this could include a sense of inferiority or weakness, or frustration. Such a feeling about his own youth could mean that the adult forgets (at least temporarily) what it was like, and hence finds it difficult to imagine the state of mind of a teenager. Another relevant tendency where anger is aroused (likely where frustration is experienced) and cannot be expressed on the cause of the trouble, is for it to be vented on someone else—generally a weaker person.

A rational type of attitude, on the other hand, could be based on a scheme

resulting from a dispassionate consideration of (for example) the course of human life. Such a scheme may be built up in the first place by observation of other people and by reading, and as a person grows he can give meaning to each stage—which will help him to remember and so to understand others at a later date.

If one can achieve this type of attitude some pitfalls of the purely emotional may be avoided. The feeling of inadequacy while learning may be accepted as quite normal under certain circumstances. Should frustration be felt, the futility and harm of venting one's feelings on somebody else will be recognised, and one might think more of the practical steps by which the cause of the frustration might be removed, or remove oneself from the cause of the frustration!

Following from this, it is interesting to note that children are said to first acquire the ability to think logically and abstractly (as distinct from learning statements about abstractions) from about the age of twelve onwards, when they start forming their own hypotheses about things, and testing them. As a new capacity, one would expect the child to be proud of it and to wish to exercise it, but in how many homes and schools is there the understanding and ability to help this mental development? It is not easy with large groups or classes, and parents and teachers may be shocked by some of the apparently outrageous ideas which the young person is trying out, and attempt to discourage them. Science could be just the subject to help develop this kind of thinking, but how many schools have the kind of teachers to make such work possible?

To come to the teenagers, about whom so much fuss is being made at present, even though only a few per cent of the juvenile population may be involved; one surely need not list the usual complaints of adults. As regards the youngsters, however, they are not so explicit, the common complaint being just that they are not understood. They are probably right, though; adults do not realise the extent of the adjustment and adaptation taking place during the teens—first the physical and emotional changes and the mental development referred to above, then the social readjustments from the relative simplicity of home and school to the increasingly complex organisation of society—for which their education may also not have been a realistic preparation.

A simple idea which might help to build up a rational understanding is that of recognised stages of development in life, each with its own characteristics and problems, and this may be what the young person is trying to do when constructing a "life plan". Three basic stages could be Youth, Middle Age, and Old Age. Youth, capable of considerable sub-division, is a stage of inferiority, but with prospects of improvement. The plateau or peak of achievement might be called Middle Age, though it will vary—the physical peak being early, the political peak very late in many cases. Old Age is a return to an inferior state, but with the prospect of decline, however.

Between the young and the old there is often an affinity, while between the young and the middle aged hostility may develop. Certainly in the latter case there is ambivalence in attitude: though the father may wish his son to do well on one hand, on the other the achievement of his child may be a threat to his own position (which it would not generally be to the grandfather). The same sort of position might also apply at work.

An additional complication to this scheme is the possible formation of groups expressing the attitudes of a particular age range, which may exaggerate particular attitudes and result in their persistence for longer than otherwise. Teenagers have indeed become practically a social class, encouraged by commercial interests which find profit in a large market for

limited ranges of products; and by the press, for which teenage misdemeanours and extravagances are news. In gangs, too, the above-mentioned tendency to work off frustration on weaker individuals may find earlier expression than otherwise.

The above general approach is perhaps modelled on that of the scientist, who when constructing a theory may take a few simple ideas and then use combinations of and deduction from them to deal with complex situations—rather than that of the literary person. The ideas of emotional versus rational attitudes, stages of development, and effects of group formation are simple (though capable of development to some degree of complexity) and they might help the ordinary person to reach an attitude which would help the young rather than antagonise them. Teachers and parents might like to study and comment on the point about mental development from twelve onwards, which 'arose' out of Piaget's work.

The Youth Service should be mentioned; though it needs expansion it is probably getting political support chiefly as a device to reduce delinquency (at the time and place at which it occurs—without going into causes) rather than a means of helping young people develop. From both viewpoints, however, it could well be that the last few years at school, and the general attitude of adults who are in charge of young people, would repay consideration.

ANALYSIS OF CONVERSION

ON NOVEMBER 7, Barbara Smoker gave a verbal review of a recently published book, *Return to Belief*, by Yvonne Lubbock, which traces the author's spiritual and intellectual journey from childhood Protestantism to agnosticism and then, in middle life, to Roman Catholicism. Miss Smoker said that she had been asked to speak about this book because she herself had made a similar journey in the opposite direction—from Roman Catholicism to humanism. Having begun her own course of philosophical and theological reading with the sole desire of strengthening her faith, she felt convinced that its accomplishing the very opposite effect had had purely intellectual causes, untinged with emotional or psychological factors, especially as she had finally renounced her old faith with deep regret. But one can never be sure of the causes of conversion—least of all, of one's own conversion.

The author of the book under review doubtless felt likewise convinced that her conversion to Rome was intellectual—and, indeed, the book is taken up mainly with a critical analysis of some of the 250 books of philosophy that she tackled during her twenty-year-long search for truth. The book is well written, and it is apparent that the author is well-read, has a fine intellect, and, above all, is absolutely sincere in her findings. But it is equally apparent to the reader that the primary cause of her conversion was not intellectual at all, but emotional. She was psychologically predisposed to Catholicism right from the start, though she did not recognise the fact and is apparently still unaware of it. The first clue to her predisposition comes right at the beginning of the Preface, where she speaks of "apparently meaningless existences in an altogether mysterious universe" and never questions the need for some ultimate purpose. A few pages further on is another clue: she renounced her old Christian beliefs but "never quite banged the door on them".

A brief guide to philosophy published a few years ago divided philosophers into two broad categories: the first, preoccupied with a supra-sensible world, permanent values, a pattern in the universe, and general truths about reality, represents the Romantic tradition; the second, more concerned with clarity about nature and the mind of man, with common sense and natural

experience, represents the Classical tradition. It is noteworthy that all the philosophers who figure prominently in Yvonne Lubbock's book belong to the first group. One assumes that, unless her reading was pre-selected (and she does not mention following any guide), she must have read some of the philosophers of empiricism, such as Locke, Hume and Mill. Since they find no place in her book, one can only assume that her natural predilection for the philosophers of idealism and intuition made her remember these and forget the others. Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard are the philosophers she chiefly takes hold of—particularly Kierkegaard, on reading whom she suffered "a sharp attack of unwilling suspension of disbelief". It was Kierkegaard's presentation of the God-Man, based on Tertullian's dictum "It is certain because it is impossible", that finally gave her the faith she wanted. Faith, says Kierkegaard, necessarily involves an element of risk; direct knowledge would destroy the need for faith. Yvonne Lubbock knew then that there would be "only one direction in which I could go if I were not to betray everything I revered. I would have to submit to what in my innermost thinking I now believed to be the truth, however great the demands it made on me intellectually, psychologically and ethically." The inevitable direction was towards the Roman Catholic Church, for, as Newman said, "Granted the fact of revelation, religion cannot but be dogmatic", and Catholicism is the only safe refuge from uncertainty.

After summarising the tenets of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, Yvonne Lubbock gives a number of quotations from some of the philosophers in the book.

The discussion which followed this excellent talk was a very spirited one.

B.S.

Correspondence

To the Editor, *The Monthly Record*

The Work of the Society

Dear Sir,

As a recently joined associate, I was envious to read of the provision of some of the finest speakers in London to address a handful of people at the Sunday morning meetings and Tuesday Evening Discussions.

I was instrumental, two years ago, in starting a Humanist Group in Dundee. I arranged the first-ever conference of Scottish Humanists early this year and I was the means of the setting up of a Regional Council of Scottish Humanists.

As Secretary of the Dundee Group, I am always on the look out for attractive speakers. Ritchie Calder has promised for some time to come to Dundee, but now that he is likely to be anchored for a while in Scotland, Edinburgh does not appear to wish to let him go.

Will any Ethical lecturer or individual, likely to visit Scotland, get in touch with me or some other representative of the Scottish branches, to lend help or even make the acquaintance of the Group?

Yours sincerely,
GEO. A. COMBE.

Society's Other Activities

Conway Discussions

Tuesdays in the Library, at 7.30 p.m.

January 2—Miss Gladys Farnell, M.Sc.: "Egypt's Glory"; narrative and colour slides.

- January 9—Dr. Hugh Schonfield (Chairman, H. G. Wells Society):
 "H. G. Wells and World Citizenship."
 .. 16—Ronald Bell, M.P.: "Migration and Population."
 .. 23—Martin Ennals (Sec. National Council for Civil Liberties):
 "Unfinished Business in Civil Liberties."
 .. 30—Dr. Stark Murray, B.Sc., M.B.: "Smoking is Anti-Social—
 Fact or Fancy?"

Country Dancing

Saturday, January 20, in the Library, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Jointly with the Progressive League. Instructress: Eda Collins. Soft shoes to be worn. Charge 2s.

The Library, Conway Hall

The Librarian will be in attendance on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings.

Added to library: *A Humanist Anthology*, by Mrs. Margaret Knight, M.A., and

The Humanist Frame, by Sir Julian Huxley, F.R.S.

Young Humanists

Meets in the Library on Mondays, at 7.30 p.m.

January 1—No meeting.

.. 15—Miss Enid Lakeman, B.Sc., A.R.I.C. From the United Europe Association.

.. 22—J. P. Muracciole on "A New Approach to the Origins of Christianity."

.. 29—"World Peace and Disarmament"—consideration of the first results of the study made by the Group.

Meeting for January 8 is being arranged.

New Year's Party

A social evening, with games and dancing, will be held in the Library, from 7.30 p.m., on January 6.

The aim is to provide a function at which older and younger members and their friends can take part. Refreshments will be provided.

Sunday Social

January 21, in the Library, at 3 p.m. Mrs. Veryard: Songs—Ancient and Modern. Members and friends invited. Tea will be served at 3.45 p.m. Charge 1s.

Thursday Evening Social

January 11, in the Library, at 7 p.m. Whist drive. Light refreshments.

Erratum—Authority v. Freedom in Moral Behaviour

In the printed summary of this discussion the word "speed" was substituted for the term "armed force". The appropriate sentence should read: "At this stage of group evolution, armed force and religious force became two of the greatest factors in group survival, only the economic factor being of more importance."

London Ramble

Sunday, January 14. Meet at 2.30 p.m. at Hyde Park Corner, outside St. George's Hospital, with a view to exploring the Piccadilly area, weather permitting. Leader: Mr. F. Thurgood.

SOUTH PLACE

THE South Place Ethical Society is a progressive movement dating from 1793 which today advocates an ethical humanism, the study and dissemination of ethical principles and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment, and believes that the moral life may stand independently in its own right.

We invite to membership all those who have abandoned supernatural creeds and find themselves in sympathy with our views.

At Conway Hall there are opportunities for participation in many kinds of cultural activities, including Discussions, Lectures, Concerts, Dances, Rambles and Socials. A Library is available and all members receive the Society's journal, *The Monthly Record*, free. The Sunday Evening Chamber Music Concerts founded in 1887 have achieved international renown.

The minimum subscriptions are: Members, 12s. 6d. p.a.; Associate Members (ineligible to vote or hold office), 7s. 6d. p.a.; Life Members, £13 2s. 6d.

Services available to Members and Associates include: The Naming Ceremony of Welcome to Children, the Solemnisation of Marriage, Memorial and Funeral Services.

The Story of South Place, by S. K. Ratcliffe (5s. from Conway Hall) is a history of the Society and its interesting development within liberal thought.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

To THE HON. REGISTRAR,
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1.

I desire to become a *Member/Associate Member of South Place Ethical Society and enclose entitling me (according to the Rules of the Society) to membership for one year from the date of enrolment.

NAME
(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

ADDRESS.....
.....

DATE..... SIGNATURE.....

*Cross out where inapplicable.