

# The MONTHLY RECORD

Vol. 65 No. 7

JULY 1960

Sixpence

Editorial

Notes by Custos

The Religion of America

*D. G. MacRae*

Is it Peace?

*Archibald Robertson*

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*T. H. Pear*

History Minus a Leader—I

*P. G. Roy*

Lolita

*F. H. A. Micklewright*

Correspondence

Activities of Kindred Societies

South Place News

Society's Other Activities

Published by

**SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY**  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Chancery 8032

# SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

SUNDAY MORNING MEETINGS AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK

July 3—W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., F.R.S.E. (Palaeontologist)

The Royal Society; 1660-1960

Baritone Solos by TED INGLIS

Hymn: No. 136

July 10—R. W. SORENSEN, M.P. (Parliamentary Mission to Venezuela)

Democracy on Trial—Venezuela and the Caribbean

Bass Solos by G. C. DOWMAN

Silent Noon

The Sun God

Vaughan Williams

William G. James

Hymn: No. 45

July 17—C. BRADLAUGH BONNER (President, World Freethinkers)

Common-sense and Crisis Today

Piano Solos by FIONA CAMERON

Sonata in C

Poisson D'or

Fantastic Dance

Scarlatti

Debussy

Shostakovich

Hymn: No. 42

The Sunday Morning meetings will be discontinued until October 2. The Annual Reunion will take place on September 25, details of which will appear in the August-September issue of *The Monthly Record*.

## SOUTH PLACE SUNDAY CONCERTS

70th SEASON (1960-61) will open on Sunday, October 2, 1960

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

Any person 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.

*The Monthly Record* is posted free to Members and Associates. The annual charge to subscribers is 8s. Matter for publication in the August issue should reach the Editor, G. C. Dowman, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, by July 5.

### Officers

Hon. Registrar: Mrs. T. C. LINDSAY

Secretary: J. HUTTON HYND

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

We wish to inform readers that, owing to reasons of economy, the General Committee have decided not to publish a *Monthly Record* for August.

August and September will appear as one issue. It is hoped that readers will appreciate the necessity for this action which the Society had felt incumbent on them to do, due to the loss sustained during the past year.

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## CONTENTS

EDITORIAL .. .. .	3
NOTES OF THE MONTH, <i>Custos</i> .. .. .	5
THE RELIGION OF AMERICA, <i>D. G. MacRae, M.A.</i> .. .. .	8
IS IT PEACE? <i>Archibald Robertson</i> .. .. .	8
STATUS AND CLASS IN ENGLAND TODAY, <i>Professor T. H. Pear, M.A.</i> ..	12
HISTORY MINUS A LEADER—I, <i>P. G. Roy</i> .. .. .	13
LOLITA—A COMMENT, <i>F. H. Amphlett Micklewright</i> .. .. .	16
CORRESPONDENCE .. .. .	19
OBITUARY .. .. .	19
ACTIVITIES OF KINDRED SOCIETIES .. .. .	19
SOCIETY'S OTHER ACTIVITIES .. .. .	20

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

## EDITORIAL

### "Inherit the Wind"

WHEN WE VISITED the St. Martin's Theatre to see the penultimate performance of "Inherit the Wind" we were so struck by the excellence of the play and the acting that a Shakespearean line came immediately to mind: "So short a lease has summer's date." Certainly this play had so short a lease when it came to such a premature end. Perhaps it will go on tour and the provinces will appreciate it, and marvel at the shortsightedness of the Londoner. Although based on the famous "monkey trial" which took place in Daytona, Tennessee, in 1925, the play does not claim to be historical, yet the references are too obvious for us not to make a comparison. The two counsel, Drummond (Darrow) and Brady (Bryan), presented a most dramatic verbal and emotional duel, especially when Drummond obtains the

unprecedented permission of the court to put the prosecuting counsel into the witness-box. Brady having the entire local support of the religious townspeople, welcomes the opportunity to confound this emissary of Satan. Drummond puts a question to Brady which nearly confounds the bigoted anti-Darwinian: "Do you ever think?"

### **"Maybe, You've Stood Still"**

In another and more gentle scene Brady regrets that the early friendship between him and Drummond has altered. He feels that they have drifted apart in recent years. "Maybe, you've stood still," says Drummond. In Daytona, in 1925, Bryan won his case but died soon afterwards. In the play, Brady, after an emotional scene which caused him to collapse in court, dies in a matter of minutes.

At the end of the play, Drummond reveals a more kindly side to his nature and after a spirited duel with a journalist, finds two books that have been left in the court room—the Bible and *The Origin of Species*. He takes them in his hands, weighing one against the other in a very thoughtful manner as though trying to decide which one to take. Finally he puts both of them into his brief-case.

No one can ignore that one book, which is really several welded into one, full as it is of murders and crimes of the worst kind, full as it is of inconsistencies, lies and hypocrisy, yet contains many of the highest ideals. On the other hand *The Origin of Species* should not be ignored by the sincere Christian but can be treated as a useful concomitant to the Bible.

### **Not a Vital Issue**

Overhearing two young men discussing the play during the interval, we heard one of them comment that the issue was not a vital one in these modern times. We know that many Humanists think on these lines, often remarking that the problem had been solved by the end of the last century. That is what the Churches would have the people believe. Eternal vigilance has always been and still is necessary; the vested interests of the Churches are ever on the alert. The Daytona trial of the courageous school-teacher who taught Darwinism, was but thirty-five years ago, and freedom is always in danger, and so precious.

### **Neutron Bomb**

From the *Daily Telegraph* of May 24: "Speculation is increasing in America that the development in nuclear developments may be a neutron bomb. Such a bomb, according to reports, would emit radiation fatal to living things without the massive destruction of a hydrogen bomb."

This might prove a mixed blessing. At the moment, the hydrogen bomb is a universal deterrent, but when a neutron bomb can be dropped without "massive physical destruction", it might be a case of "I'm all right, Jack", and make the cessation of war farther off than ever.

### **Unilateral Disarmament**

The dangers that would be incurred by unilateral disarmament are immediately apparent, but we are not quite happy that every endeavour has been made to negotiate a just peace. Immediately after the failure of the Summit Conference, we were dismayed to read that the price of armament shares had risen. As Dr. John Gill recently told us at Conway Hall: "In 1953 1 per cent (of the American people) had 90 per cent of all common stocks, virtually all state, local and corporate bonds", which reinforces this dismay. The continuance of the cold war, beneficial as it may be to some, puts us in closer peril to a "hot war". It appals and horrifies us.

## *The World Refugee Year Fund*

It was gratifying for the Society to be able to hand to the World Refugee Committee at the end of May, the sum of £202. Our thanks are tendered to those who so kindly made this possible, particularly to the one who sent us a cheque for £50 at the close of May.

A letter from the World Refugee Year U.K. Committee is included in this issue.

## *Subscription by Covenant*

We would again like to call the attention of members to the benefits which accrue to the Society when subscriptions are made under a seven-year covenant. The few members who did so during the past few months when this system was in operation, made it possible to claim back from the Income Tax Commissioners a sum of over six pounds.

Forms for this service are available at Conway Hall.

## *Our Sunday Morning Speakers in July*

It is appropriate that Dr. W. E. Swinton, as a distinguished scientist and a Fellow of the Royal Society, Edinburgh, should give the Tercentenary address, "The Royal Society: 1660-1960", on July 3.

On July 10, Mr. R. W. Sorensen, M.P., under the title "Democracy on Trial", will report impressions received during his recent visit to Venezuela and the British West Indies. (It will be recalled that Mr. Sorensen, who had kindly consented to preside at the Conway Memorial Lecture in March, was called at short notice to take part in a Parliamentary mission to Venezuela and the Caribbean—Mrs. Sorensen very graciously taking his place in the chair on the occasion of the Memorial Lecture by Mrs. Mary Stocks.)

The meeting on July 17 will bring the current Sunday Morning programme to a close. Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union of Freethinkers, will discuss "Common-sense and Crisis". In the invitation to give the closing address, the General Committee, on behalf of our members and friends, wish to honour Mr. Bonner on reaching this year his 70th birthday, and so to recall, with respect and appreciation, the fine record of service in which he has upheld with distinction the great tradition of his family in its long association with the Rationalist-Secularist-Freethought-Ethical Movement.

The Sunday Morning meetings will be resumed in October.

## **Notes by Custos**

IT IS NOT without interest that the older freethinkers had a great concern over the reform of systems of land tenure. Bradlaugh, for example, wrote much of value on the subject. We recalled this fact when recently we heard the history of a piece of land in a South London district. It was originally part of a far larger area enclosed at the end of the eighteenth century by the Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the more active of the contemporary stealers of the common from the goose who hastened to prosecute the man who stole the goose from the common! In due course, it passed into the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who granted building leases upon it. By the time that it had passed further into the hands of their successors, the Church Commissioners, many of the leases were running out. Finally, without any hesitation, the Church Commissioners followed out a policy of selling out on many of their real estate investments. The land was sold in a parcel to a development trust who had no sort of interest in the district as such. In their turn, they sold it to a well-known firm of builders. It has been redeveloped and words fail the onlooker! Its pleasant characteristics and vista have all disappeared and a bull-dozed wilderness has become the

site of terraces of brick horrors so far as architecture be concerned. The amenities of a central area within a most pleasant district have been utterly destroyed. Persons resident around, whose leases of Church land are now nearing their end, are wondering what is to happen to them in their turn. One cannot blame development trusts who are solely interested in large profits and quick returns. But the original harm was done by the manner in which the Church Commissioners unloosed the estate on to the open market. They are a body who consist of various highly placed ecclesiastics and other establishmentarians who, whenever they are attacked, are anxious to point out that criticism only comes from enemies of the Church and that their final aim is with heavenly treasure. Yet, in this case, they also seem to have been busily engaged in storing up treasure upon earth "where rust and moth doth corrupt". Indeed, in their anxiety to replenish the coffers through the liquidation of assets, they had no sort of concern for the well-being of the local residents who did not want the appearance of their district utterly ruined by inferior building. It is clear that the Commission is doing nothing other than running a business; pretence to being more holy, moral or righteous than other people simply does not bear examination. The business is run in a way which is concerned solely with legal profit; if some people get trampled upon in one way or another, it is just too bad. We would only comment that it is high time to limit the powers of these men of God in the area of land tenure as a matter of social and public interest. It also seems that, in future, Ethicists or Rationalists who claim that people like *Custos* should not attack the Church as an anti-social institution, must do so with eyes that have been opened fully to what actually takes place when the Church has control of the land. Bradlaugh was not far wrong in his criticisms and it was for social as well as theological reasons that Englishmen learned to detest the name of Bloody Mary!

### *Christian Missionaries*

We hear much about the work of Christian missionaries overseas and large sums are collected in this country by societies working for their support. It is this fact which lends interest to an item from China in *The Guardian* of February 26. Apparently, the Chinese Protestant Churches are coming together under a pressure from within and this reunion movement is affecting the Chinese Anglicans. An Anglican spokesman considered it unlikely that foreign missionaries would ever again be allowed into China. He considered that the missionary penetration of the last century was over and that missionary efforts of this kind made against Chinese dignity. In fact, he asserted that the Chinese Church is in a far stronger position as a native and indigenous body. We were reminded at once of the link between missionaries and imperialism, of the remark of Belfort Bax at the period of nineteenth-century expansion that "trade follows the Bible and the flag follows trade". It is only necessary to take a look at the main last century supporters of missionary enterprise to see what economic interests lay behind it. This form of sanctified economic expansion is certainly at cross-purposes with a rising nation conscious of its own potentialities and using a scientific approach to its achievement. We can well understand why Western missionaries are anathema to the new China. Humanists would do well to probe the story of missionary enterprise; it has never been accurately and fully examined since Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner wrote *Christianising the Heathen* over thirty years ago. Recently, in his *Love in the South Seas*, the anthropologist Bengt Daniellsson called attention to the failure of missionary enterprise in one part of Polynesia simply because the traditionally Christian moral approach to life did not fit in with the inherited social traditions of the tribe. Monogamy, for example, proved to be an insuperable problem which left unconvinced the traditionally polygamous tribes. The only really

satisfactory civilising approach is one based upon a scientific anthropology leading to a development of the local traditions. But this is exactly what the Christian missionary does not want to do. He wishes to convert the native peoples to his own brand of theology whilst many of his supporters at home will wish to annex the natives to their flag or, at least, to gain a monopoly control over their markets. Opposition to the missionary societies does not merely spring from an opposition to their theology. It is supported and buttressed by a desire for the best development of localised social cultures and by their education into a scientific approach to life. Too many missionaries have adopted the Kiplingesque approach of "lesser breeds without the law" to enable the humanist to regard them as satisfactory allies in such an undertaking. In the meanwhile, we are interested in the attitude of the government of China. They clearly refuse to have the missionaries inside the country for one good, solid reason, that they know too much about them!

### *Religion in the Universities*

A great deal has been said of late about the strength of religion in the British universities. We have long had our suspicions concerning the reality underlying many of these statements. The undergraduate has a questing mind and will probably evolve a passing interest in religious belief. As his knowledge increases, it will tend to fade away and will cease to play any real part in his life. Of course, a university is a mixed place and there will always be the substratum of "pass-men", men of warped outlook and the like who will find their way to the various fundamentalist groups and later swell the ranks of the Evangelical clergy. In most cases, they are either men who are blankly ignorant or men whose psychological make-up is strongly patristic and whose conception of God is merely the father-image of absolute authority. But these groups do not represent the real living culture of a university. The students of Edinburgh University who run their magazine, *Comment*, have recently polled 700 students in the Faculty of Arts concerning three questions: "Do you attend Church? Do you believe in a Deity? Has religion an important part to play today?" The results are more than revealing. Of first-year students, 80 per cent were believers and 6 per cent were not; of fourth-year students, the percentages were those of 59 per cent believers and 23 per cent who definitely took the negative side. The writer of the article draws a valid and quite justifiable conclusion. "The result is to be expected. As a student goes through the university acquiring more knowledge and experience of life, rational thought begins to play a greater part in his or her beliefs." One of the more interesting facts arising from these figures is that they are drawn from the Faculty of Arts where scientific methods are applied to the humane studies. It cannot be said that they represent in any way a materialism learned in the scientific laboratories. They illustrate within such fields as history, literature or philosophy the impact of learning and clarified thinking upon religious beliefs. In short, they justify the thesis that increased learning in any of these fields does literally nothing to increase grounds for belief. We understand that the organisers of the poll are to carry on their enquiries into the faculties of science and medicine and we have no doubt whatever that something of the same result will emerge there. In other words, religious orthodoxy is a term which is rapidly becoming synonymous with either ignorance or a pathological conditioning of thought. Such a fact is one which suggests a good ground for the practical disappearance of religion as a vital factor conditioning the lives of the majority of people today. When a religion starts to die, it usually does so from the head downwards! It is this process which may be observed among the more thoughtful members of contemporary society.

F.H.A.M.

# The Religion of America

BY

D. G. MACRAE, M.A.

THE First Amendment to the American Constitution—one of the ten Amendments which make up the Bill of Rights—unequivocally establishes that the intention of the United States should be a society completely without established religion and completely open to the free practice of religion. The founding fathers of the American Republic were rather typical eighteenth-century deists or nominal Christians, rather than believing members of any of the Churches. Their country was, however, despite Catholic and Jewish elements dating from the mid-eighteenth-century, a Protestant one—a Protestantism that gave rise to a dominance of Methodist and Baptist elements in the South, of Presbyterian and Calvinist elements yielding to Unitarianism in the North.

This Protestantism provides the matrix in which American institutions grew. The great migrations from the 1840's down to 1920 brought in new and considerable Catholic and Jewish strains. In consequence, America is today a country in which some 25 per cent of the population are members of the Catholic Church and rather more than 3 per cent Jews.

It is also the most devout of modern countries. About 110 million Americans are members of one Church or another. It is normal for an American to express his Americanism, his allegiance to a society chosen by his parents or grandparents, through his Protestantism, or his Catholicism, or his Judaism. These three great religions are like separate crucibles replacing the older "melting pot".

This religion is more than a kind of conformity and an expression of patriotism. Most of the founding fathers and probably Abraham Lincoln, with their heterodox views, could not run for office in contemporary America. With Church membership goes the secular religion of Americanism and that allegiance to the flag which every American school child swears every morning. Where 36 out of 100 were Church members in 1900, today about 65 per cent of Americans are affiliated to a Church and probably another 15 per cent are practising adherents.

All this, however, is not merely conformity and patriotism. Much of it is theologically and socially profoundly serious and, I think, superior in most ways to anything typical of this country. No society can hold together without a cult: the religion of America is Americanism; Americanism includes being religious. But this is not all: like it or not, the religious revival in America, despite its critics, is one of the most genuine and provokingly interesting social phenomena of our time.

*(Summary of a lecture delivered on March 13)*

## Is it Peace?

BY

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

IT IS SIXTEEN YEARS since I first lectured to this Society, and fifteen since I was appointed a regular lecturer. At that time the war against Fascism was not yet over. Turning up the lectures which I gave at that time, I find that I gave one on *The Grounds of Internationalism*, in which I pointed out that the idea of human society as world-wide (as opposed to the idea of the late Sir Arthur Keith that society was merely the tribe or nation, and that inter-tribal or international morality did not exist) was a revolutionary idea and

involved a radical break with the ideas expressed in the average press article or B.B.C. talk. If we deluded ourselves, I then said, with the idea that World War II was an ordinary war to be ended by an ordinary peace, we were lost. To ensure that that was not so, I pinned my hopes to the then recent re-election of Roosevelt as President of the U.S.A., to the great part certainly (as I then thought) to be played by the U.S.S.R. in making the peace, and to shoulder-to-shoulder co-operation between this country and these two great allies.

Well, Roosevelt died and was succeeded by the pigmy Truman. The war ended with the dropping of the first atomic bombs and the inauguration of what has proved a new reign of terror over all mankind. The war-time alliance was succeeded by "cold war" between the former allies. ("Cold war" means perpetually preparing for a "hot war" which we know very well would destroy us all, but which we dare not renounce, because we dare not face problems which renunciation would raise.) And so fifteen years after the end of the shooting war we still do not know whether it is war or peace.

If I feel rather strongly about this, it is because it is the second time in my life that I have been "had". I am old enough to remember World War I. I still remember the shock with which we Freethinkers and Reformists, who had formed our minds on Shelley and Carlyle and Thomas Huxley and Shaw and the Webbs, faced the fact that apparently civilised powers could still of set policy plunge whole peoples into war—and into war, moreover, which no longer meant a gentlemanly game in which Generals out-generalled each other and soldiers killed men who were trying to kill them, but an obscene horror in which submarines sank merchantmen in order to starve civil populations, and airmen rained death from the sky on the men, women and children of enemy cities.

In World War I we blamed it all on Kaiser Wilhelm and the German Junkers. That was what official propaganda told us to do. The press-lords and their hired journalists went further and blamed it all on the whole German people. I never fell for that. I never thought the whole German people responsible for World War I or World War II either, and that for a very simple reason: a whole people can never be responsible for *anything*. In the words of that old Jewish internationalist tract, the book of Jonah, a whole people includes thousands "that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand". Or as Shaw put it, "I have no enemies under the age of eight". But while I never fell for the filthy propaganda of the thugs who own, the crooks who edit, and the prostitutes who write the popular press, I accepted the premise of German war-guilt in the sense that the rulers of Germany were criminals against mankind. Accepting this, I held that the victorious allies had the right and the duty after the war to bring those criminals to justice. I thought the demand for hanging the Kaiser justified. I should have been right in thinking so, if there had ever been any serious intention to bring the Kaiser to book. But there was no such intention; it was a dishonest vote-catching cry.

Another bit of propaganda for which I fell was "the war to end war". The war, as it went on, became so filthy and so horrible that only one thing could have justified it. If after the war the victors had built a new world in which war was made for ever impossible, the horror would have been worthwhile. I think it was Wells who coined the phrase, "a war to end war". I took it from him and used it in argument with friends who took a pacifist line. They were sceptical, indeed indignantly so; and I now know that they were right in their scepticism.

The scales fell from my eyes one day in 1930—twelve years after the end of World War I—when I read in the newspapers that in a German general election five million votes had been cast for Hitler's party of National Socialists. I knew the Nazis by reputation as a party of ultra-reactionaries

who said that Germany had been stabbed in the back by Jews and Communists, and who called for a war of revenge to recover all she had lost and more than she had lost. And now they were winning elections. So it had not been a war to end war. Wells had been wrong; I had been wrong; official propaganda had lied.

There was one set of people in the world who had not only opposed the war, but led a victorious revolution against it. At the time I was bitterly against the Russian Bolsheviks. As Sir Bernard Pares put it, "their revolution happened in the middle of our war". Besides, to imagine that socialism could be built in a backward peasant country was surely absurd. They were bound to fail. So I did not take them seriously. But now, in 1930, with the Nazis winning in Germany and World War II visibly in the offing, I began to wonder. Was I so sure that the Russians were wrong? If World War II came and Europe became a gas-infested graveyard (in those days we took for granted that gas would be used in any future war) might not Soviet Russia emerge as the sole survivor from the shambles? I knew all the arguments against Bolshevism: I had used them myself. But if the choice lay between war and Bolshevism, I should not choose war. I had been "had" once by war.

In 1933 Hitler came into power in Germany, and the oddest things began to happen. Those press lords, editors and journalists who had bawled their anti-German propaganda in World War I; who had told us there was "no good German but a dead German"; who had coined the slogan, "They will cheat you yet, those Junkers"—those same press lords, editors and journalists showed remarkable goodwill to Hitler. After all, we read, he had saved Germany from communism. He might yet save Europe from communism. When he in fact intervened in Spain and helped Franco to power, their goodwill increased. Fight Hitler? Never! Let him chew up Czechoslovakia; what were the Czechs to us? Hats off to Neville Chamberlain, who had gone to Munich and brought back peace in our time! "I have here Herr Hitler's written word—" But at that my stomach turned. Next week I joined the Communist Party.

As we know, we had to fight Hitler after all. All that Chamberlain achieved by Munich was to ensure that, when we did fight, we fought without an ally. Poland fell in a fortnight; France fell in a few months. And when we *did* emerge victorious from World War II, we did so in alliance with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.—that alliance which before the war the whole Tory Party and their press lords, editors and journalists had laughed to scorn and laboured at all costs to avoid.

Fate treated our statesmen better than they deserved: they gained victory and a second chance. As in 1914, so in 1939 the rulers of Germany had wagered for world domination. As in 1918, so in 1945 they had lost. Now was the time, surely, to do what we had failed to do in 1918—to root out that evil ruling class who twice in a lifetime had bathed the world in blood, and to do that in alliance with the only people in Germany who had opposed World War I and World War II—the political heirs of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg; the party once named Spartacist, later Communist, and now the Socialist Unity Party. With their help Germany might have been cleansed from the black record of her past and turned into a peaceful member of the comity of nations.

But no! West Germany, the Germany of Krupp and the industrialists, of Oberländer and the ex-Nazis, is petted and rearmed. East Germany, where the political heirs of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg hold power, and such types as Krupp and Oberländer are under proper restraint, is excommunicated and unrecognised. If the Russians propose to terminate the occupation régime by making a peace treaty with Eastern Germany, that forsooth is an "ultimatum" and a "threat to Berlin".

And if it were, what is Berlin to us? What has Berlin ever done for us? What has Berlin *not* done *against* us?

I am an old man. I have been sneered at as "a progressive of fifty years ago". So I am, and proud of it, but I have also learned from two world wars. I doubt whether our statesmen, our press lords, our editors or our journalists ever learn anything. I confess myself tired of them. Let them go to hell their own way; but they shall not drag our children and our grandchildren with them. Everyone who fights *that*—call him Communist, fellow-traveller, starry-eyed idealist, wild-cat striker or what you will—has my support, and shall have it while I have breath in my body.

*(Summary of an address delivered May 15)*

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## ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

AT THE SUNDAY morning meeting on May 15, Mr. J. Hutton Hynd accompanied Mr. Archibald Robertson on the platform, and in the following terms made fitting reference to Mr. Robertson's regretted retirement as one of our Appointed Lecturers:

I know it would be the wish of the General Committee, and of the Members and Friends of the South Place Ethical Society, that I should say a word or two in due recognition of this occasion—when Mr. Archibald Robertson gives his last address as one of our Appointed Lecturers.

As you know, our Appointed Lecturers are invited to speak once a month or so; other speakers are invited from time to time, and I hasten to say that we hope to hear Mr. Robertson at sundry times and on diverse subjects on a Sunday morning and on other occasions, and of course to see him at some of our social gatherings whether he speaks in public address or not.

Today, Mr. Robertson rounds off fifteen years or so of outstanding service to the Society as an Appointed Lecturer; and we wish to assure him that his fine record calls forth our warm appreciation and grateful thanks—as well as our sincere admiration.

As a lecturer, Mr. Robertson has been prompt in his response to our letters, meticulous in the preparation of his enlightening and stimulating discourses, and punctual (almost punctilious!) in the timing of his address and the question period which follows. His topics have been timely, and his remarks helpful and always to the point at issue.

Mr. Robertson has been the sworn enemy of all forms of tyranny and humbug and pretence—perhaps especially of "pious pretence"—yes, even when "pious" pretence has seemed to appear among his fellow rationalists, secularists, ethicists, and humanists! He has been skilful yet wifal tactful in his use of the ironical allusion, the satirical turn of phrase, and the straightforward and courageous utterance.

We thank Mr. Robertson for his many addresses, his articles and comments in our magazines, and for his several books; and it is our hope that many more speeches and articles and volumes will continue to engage his penetrating analysis and his gift of literary expression.

While to some, at first impression, Mr. Robertson may seem to wear a certain aspect of severity, those who have been privileged to know him more intimately have found in him the warm heart, the compassionate spirit, and the saving sense of humour. Justice he has always sought—but justice tempered with mercy. As a distinguished historian, he knows only too well the complexities and ambiguities of human nature, and he does not expect too much! We feel grateful that we have had Mr. Robertson as one of our lecturers, and that we have known him as friend and colleague.

If "retirement" is the right word on this occasion, then we wish for Mr.

and Mrs. Robertson a long and useful and happy retirement. And so, Mr. Robertson, on behalf of the General Committee and of your many friends in this Society, I give assurance, if such is needed, of our grateful thanks and affectionate good wishes.

## Status and Class in England Today

BY

PROFESSOR T. H. PEAR, M.A.

THE SUCCESS in America and here of Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers*—for eighteen weeks it was the top-ranking American non-fiction best-seller—has popularised the phrases "status-consciousness" and "status-thinking".<sup>1</sup> It has been extensively reviewed, but often by writers with no sociological or psychological training who, focusing on its readability or style have, as Professor Asa Briggs remarked,<sup>2</sup> "quickly invented a sociology of England all their own". He thinks that the contemporary quest for status here and in America is merely the latest episode in a long and complicated story with only the visible objects of status having changed; and the language, too, in which writers describe the processes of social mobility and social adjustment. He suggests that we share the status problem with the Americans although there are significant variations between us.

So far I have read no appraisal of *The Status Seekers* by a social psychologist. The sociologist is apt to present his picture in terms of percentages, groups, trends, but the ways in which an individual person experiences certain social differences are obviously important, and their description ought not to be left to the imaginative novelist and playwright. "Class" may be a tabooed word in America, but is not (or not yet) here, even if we are moving towards a classless society. I believe that in England it is often easy to distinguish status from class, and useful to employ some other concepts, e.g. rank, stratum and elites, it is possible here only to indicate them briefly.

*Rank* is publicly acknowledged, and usually implies power (of the phrase to "pull one's" rank: re give an order to a subordinate).

*Stratum* can often, though not always, be objectively defined. One's financial stratum is known to the income tax assessors. Scientific, literary, musical and sporting strata are usually marked out in membership of associations, societies and clubs. Some strata are more "class implicated" than others.

*Status* as a working concept, in England, the term can be used for a position (often in a hierarchy) which is stated publicly, e.g. mayor, police constable, chairman, president (of an association or company). Occupancy of the post has often been earned, it is usually for a period of years, and may not always imply any special social estimate after a successor has been appointed. But status may not be widely known to the public. The character of a great bank or business concern may command respect in and on the penumbra of his group, but his may be almost unknown elsewhere.

The boundaries of status are usually definite, one is a mayor or one is not. The "banks" which mark off class are perpetually being eroded but groynes are built and serviced by class-curators who usually themselves have originated in classes lower which they defend and publicise.

The criterion of class which appeals to a psychologist (and may distress

<sup>1</sup> (London, Longmans Green.)

<sup>2</sup> B.B.C. broadcast, Third Programme, March 7, 1960.

many sociologists) is subjective—how you treat others and how you expect them to treat you. This feeling may change rapidly if the first perception of a person's class is contradicted by his subsequent behaviour. The chief determinant of class is still—even in the shake-up of financial strata today—convivial. People of your own class are those who would spontaneously (not for reasons of business or official duty) invite you to their houses, and would expect or at least not be surprised at, reciprocal action by you.

Class is still recognised in most parts of England by symbols such as birth, possession of property (if it has been in the family for a long time), ways of speaking, manners and taste. These three often shade into each other. Clothes are decreasingly class-signs. For sport, holidays and casual wear, "foreign" clothes are becoming popular; a style, publicised in newspapers and on television, is quickly mass-produced and may be dropped as quickly. Before long for a man to wear his own clothes at a public ceremony may be a sign of eccentricity.

Taste in clothes can obviously be bought and some of the vendors are now powerful enough to pose as the arbiters of taste. Speech and manners take longer to buy. In *Pygmalion* we see illustrations of both these assertions. Almost everywhere in England speech is a sign of class, though with the examples of radio and television it is possible for many people to become bi-lingual speaking in the way characteristic of their class, and if desired, with "received pronunciation". (That speech differences get only a few lines in *The Status Seekers*—and indeed in most American books on sociology and social psychology—is significant.)

The class-criteria in speech are choice and avoidance of certain words and phrases, intonation, speech-melody (hardly ever mastered by foreigners) and accents regional and social. Speaking between members of the same class may deliberately include or exclude the outsider.

The concept of the *elite* (overt, covert, and semi-covert—the Establishment) is useful here. Detached observers call attention to the influence in England of sound men ready to advise on subjects of which they have little knowledge. The elite in the scientific world are the high priests of our present civilisation.

The boundaries of class are being blurred in this country but at very different places. Whether the educational "ladder" is a ladder, a set of parallel escalators, or a greasy pole is still debatable. It is, however, time that "increasing social mobility through education brings together people from different social backgrounds and starts them talking about personal social problems which in this country, at least, were once kept in the cupboard" (Briggs). But though class differences may be diminishing, status differences remain. And these may become increasingly important if we pass towards some kind of a meritocracy.

(Summary of a lecture delivered on May 22)

## History Minus a Leader—I

BY

P. G. ROY

PROGRESS HAD REQUIRED the destruction of slave economy; this the slaves could not do, for they were not socially organised nor had they any progressive idea how to replace the old order. But it was done, from outside, by barbarians who had no choice but to be slaves or masters of the decaying Roman Empire. They had, through service in the legions, become acquainted with the Roman way of life and warfare. The Roman provinces, continually ransacked by dispossessed gangs of robbers, greedy adventurers and pirates,

fell an easy prey to the barbarians. The foundation of chattel slavery was thus destroyed, not because the barbarians were averse to this most ancient form of exploitation, but because they could not master the population of a far superior civilisation in the old way. Serfdom, which had existed in classical society as a sideline, became now the outstanding fundament of society.

### *Slaves and Serfs*

Serfdom arose naturally in the many instances when a barbarous (and mostly nomadic) horde conquered a sessile community of agriculturists of whom they gradually adopted the higher ways of culture; the victors felt themselves inferior in education and could not treat the vanquished as mere chattels. Slaves too had different standing, varying from the labouring slaves to the petty official and the palace courtier; yet the Assyrians and Romans were not entirely dependent upon the higher education of their Egyptian or Greek slaves, they too had men of learning. The barbarians, however, were unable to check the activities of their unfree clerks and scribes, they also were unable to draw income from pure slave labour. In a state of backward economy it will probably be more profitable for the conquerors, as well as for the conquered, to let the dependent population in their own households and on their own plots, at the same time taxing them heavily in the way of tribute and services.

Just as nobody would wilfully ruin his own tools, so the slave had been kept in more or less good trim; public slaves, working on governmental domains, were even protected by legislation regulating their duties and customary recuperation; the conditions of the Roman *colons* developed as a result of historical necessity by the working of economic and social agencies, characterised in the fourth and fifth centuries by the basic idea that the peasant was a serf of the soil and therefore changed hands with the estate he belonged to. This was the prevailing condition for the lower working orders during the Middle Ages and included not only the peasants but also rural artisans.

The barbarian conquest meant a heavy drawback on European civilisation and this lower level marked the development of the Medieval Church. Society had been organised on the basis of village communes organised in fiefs under a feudal overlord. However, the technique of production, after the removal of chattel slavery, found a way out to higher development than existed in the primitive village communes.

During the ensuing Dark Ages, the peasants owing to the general insecurity prevailing then sought shelter near the castle of a mighty baron or bishop; they had to submit their tract of land to the prospective lord who, in turn, invested them with it as a pawn of feudal services. This is the characteristic of Feudalism, together with the compulsory organisation of guilds of craftsmen and merchants under the regimentation of a rigid and compulsory Church.

This sort of centralisation and regimentation had already started to take shape in the Byzantine Empire. The originally free associations for religious and social purposes became State castes. Always the new germinates in the old, decaying society that has to be broken up so that the new can be born.

After the fall of the Roman Empire it was the abbeys and monasteries that preserved the learning and experience of Antiquity and passed it on (such as literacy, scientific farming and cattle raising, chemistry, etc.). They were the model farms, and they ran the only schools, almshouses and hospitals. Clerics were the most trusted and skilful counsellors to the kings and princes. Being a pool of learning and the only source of knowledge all round, the influence of Christianity and their priests rose enormously, so that the masses quickly and readily adopted the new creed for the benefit of

superior civilisation. *No class of society could do without the Church* who at the same time doled out from their amassed riches in care of the poor; mass poverty was not relieved (for it is necessary for the survival of religion), but it was soothed and mitigated. Therefore, the Medieval Church at first had played a progressive rôle, *every social class depended on her services* and consequently *every struggle was fought under the cloak of religion*. Up to the French Revolution *all social and economic disputes were disguised as religious disputes*: the Crusades, the Peasant Wars and the Reformation together with the Thirty Years War.

### *The Crusades*

The bulk of the crusaders consisted of people who had nothing to lose at home yet hoped to gain great loot abroad: serfs who could no longer stand the pressure exerted by their manorial lord, adventurers, criminals on the run, and lower grades of the decaying aristocracy who even had taken to waylaying. To divert such dissatisfied and restive sections of the population, their spiritual masters delegated them to fighting the "horned devils" in the Holy Land. Yet there they found to their surprise how far better the Arabs and infidels fared without the blessings of Christendom; the crusaders there picked up the use of fine table glass, muslin, silk, rice, prunes, etc., of medicine and arts, and they came back with new wants and the knowledge of novel methods of production. New markets opened and particularly the seafaring Italian towns grew rich; the first free burghers arose.

Venice, for instance, contributed to the crusades her fleet of galleys and armed convoys for a handsome fee and part of the prospective spoil. During the fourth crusade, Enrico Dandolo, the blind Doge, maintained that the crusaders had cheated him of the agreed fares and demanded the whole plunder together with certain townships. Unholy as the means were, the rise of the rich commercial centres in Upper Italy marked the birth of modern bourgeoisie.

So long as the Mediterranean remained the main route of commerce, the Italian towns prospered; when in 1452 Constantinople fell to the Osmanli Turks, a way had to be found to reach from the West the Far Eastern homelands of imported goods (e.g. incense and spices) with the result that then Western Europe—particularly Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands, later England—began to flourish. The discovery of the New World spelt the death-knell for landlordism, feudalism and knighthood. The lords became increasingly indebted to the rich merchants and moneylenders; the lower aristocracy (the knights) were deprived of their historical and transitory rôle of protectors of the tillers and became mercenaries. After the influx of precious metals from the New World, money became more valuable than landed property; the manorial lords no longer accepted their "dues" in kind but demanded payment in money which the peasants were unable to make. In the end the masses of peasantry, without land and without any means of production, unable even to secure the bare necessities of life, were driven into desperate rebellions, which seemed a godsend to the lower knights to usurp leadership of these badly armed, untrained and unorganised bands; they altogether were devoid of a clear vision of how to remedy the ills of their tottering society. Everybody was drawn into the whirlpool that multiplied the protracted agonies of Feudalism. This, in turn, enabled the kings to establish themselves as absolute rulers.

### *The Reformation*

So far nobody had doubted that Christianity was the only existing truth; still, the fact that, for all that, mankind remained beset with growing

calamities occupied the minds. The simplest (and oldest) way out was that mankind, including the clergy up to the Pope himself, had departed from the unadulterated truth of the creed, or else everything ought to be well. At the same time the theological doctrine of "Free Will" (or, as Voltaire put it, the "faculty whereby man contrives to earn eternal damnation") raised sharply the problem whether or not God was responsible for his own creation and man, whom he had made faulty yet answerable for his deeds. Before the Calvinist explanation of Necessitarianism (seen to perfection in the Apartheid theory of the Dutch Reformed Church: The Bantu is black because God singled him out for contempt, hence to humiliate him is a work of piety), a transitory stage was reached in the explanation that God alone was free and answerable to nobody. Man is free only to realise the Will of God. This, however, insinuated that God foreknew that the majority of the human race would realise His will only in the form of going to hell.

Calvinistic Determinism then arose as the doctrine of the revolutionary rule of the merchant versus the Feudalistic fundament of the Roman Church. Nobody ever meant to oppose the Church as such, they only wanted to restore the doctrine to what purity it supposedly once possessed. This, they expected, would cure all social ills; if the world could be brought back, by *reform*, to the genuine simplicity of Christ, order and peace must be restored.

However, conditions had profoundly changed since the time Christianity arose, so nobody was able to turn the wheel of progress back and reinstate classical slavery, the soil in which Early Christianity thrived. Reformed Christendom could be nothing else but the religious cloak of a new class and society, and it was exactly this which caused the rift with Rome as the ideological centre of reaction and feudal conservatism. Martin Luther was himself greatly alarmed when he noticed the effects of his theses and wholeheartedly backed the princes against the revolting peasants when he found himself in the role of the Sorcerer's Apprentice—unable to master the power he had unleashed.

## Lolita—A Comment

BY

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

IN SOME WAYS, the novel, *Lolita*, which has occasioned so much comment is a challenge to be faced by any organised approach to ethical problems. As a piece of writing, it can certainly claim to be more than powerful even though its interest is restricted to psychological processes within a mind and to the reactions which these processes set into being within the life of the narrator. The story as a story is decidedly unpleasant. Its narrator is writing from the condemned cell where he has been committed for murder. He is of an unfortunate psychological type, an adult man who is attracted to "nymphets" or young schoolgirls. It is a type which occurs again and again in the casebooks of the psychiatrist whilst accounts of criminal proceedings frequently report incidents where an attraction of this kind has resulted in a course of conduct ending in a court of law. The narrator of the story finds himself in lodgings where his landlady's daughter is a girl of the type which attracts him. Perhaps his most distasteful act is the manner

in which he returns the mother's approaches and marries her in order to be able to conduct in safety an affair with the daughter. The mother finds out, there is a scene and she is almost immediately killed in a street accident, a piece of somewhat forced melodrama. There then follows a long and dreary sequence of life with Lolita spent in travelling over the whole American continent from one motel to another. Lolita is a thoroughly nasty character, hard and selfish with all of the callous cruelty of the heedless child. In the end, a man enables her to run away with a nondescript young lad who has proved attractive to her. The narrator tracks them down and at last finds them married with a child already on the way. His temper snaps and he kills the man who took her away. His strange errant course has ended in murder.

As a piece of literature, *Lolita* deserves Philip Toynbee's description of the book as a powerful novel, one of the novels of the year. Indeed, its author, Vladimir Nabokov, is to be congratulated as his native language is Russian and yet he has succeeded in using his adopted tongue to the fulness of its lights and shades. As a story of insight into a mind and its motives, it will probably rank as one of the more successful performances in fiction. Certainly, it is not pornography and the ado which preceded its English publication is to be much regretted. Not a line could be incriminated in any way and anybody using the novel to secure a titillation of the more salacious emotions would be shamefully misusing it. There seems to be no likelihood of its being banned or any reason why it should not be protected fully by the recent changes in the law concerning obscene publications. At the same time, it is impossible not to feel some satisfaction that it has appeared long after the days of Lord Brentford, the Home Secretary who many years ago banned Miss Radclyffe Hall, or of Mr. Mead, the metropolitan magistrate who once sat in judgment upon D. H. Lawrence. Doubtless, both of them would have found ready means of putting *Lolita* out of harm's way and of performing an assumed public service in so doing! The novel is, on the contrary, a piece of literature and fully deserves free publication.

At the same time, it is a milestone in the popular understanding of psychological problems. Normality is a difficult term to accept for it can only be defined through the striking of a mean average within the psychological quotas and is much influenced in its outward, practical aspects by social and economic pressure. At the same time, a widespread variation from the average norm, which is clearly anti-social through its influence upon children, is obviously abnormal to a degree and a variation in sexual conduct against which any society has a right to protect itself. Yet, courts of law again and again have to listen to some or other modifications of the Lolita story in a quantity which shows that the variation is not uncommon in a relative sense and is not suppressed by a rigid and stern application of the criminal law. Charles Terrot, in his recent work, *The Maiden Tribute*, tells a terrible story of the child-prostitution and the like which was outlawed in this country by the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. Yet, despite severe penalties, cases continue to an extent which will underline the fact that a psychological obsession despises the warning cautions provided by emotions of fear. The behaviour described by Charles Terrot as not uncommon in Victorian London was of a kind which appears in the conduct of the narrator in the novel.

From an ethical point of view, it is obviously wholly inadequate to talk about "sin" and to imagine that this conduct arises from a dirty wish and a defiance of the known good. Faced with the pursuer of "nymphets", society is faced with a sick mind within which the unruly desires of the subconscious have escaped the vetting of the rational consciousness and have appeared as a conduct-pattern at war with the patterns approved by any

balanced social order. At the same time, the balanced society cannot tolerate these variations with the even greater extremes into which they may pass. The narrator of *Lolita* in the end goes the whole way to the extreme of murder. Yet the reader gains the impression that a competent psychiatrist could have dealt with the case in its earlier stages and he will feel the tragedy that, after such research as that of Havelock Ellis or of Hirschfeld, such a story should still be possible in a society which has done little towards the use of scientific means to make it impossible or, at any rate, to make radical treatment commonly available.

The novel raises a serious social comment. Sex variations, after they have reached a certain point, particularly between the adult and the non-adult, are not a private concern but a matter for social enquiry and restraint. They certainly should not be treated in the spirit of the Wolfenden Report by sweeping the dirt under the carpet and then not talking about it because it cannot be seen freely in the streets. *Lolita* underlines the extent to which conduct-patterns are defined by sexual behaviour and the extent to which this behaviour is conditioned in the individual by psychological states. Until this point is fully realised and absorbed, a great deal of criminal law will simply miss the point. It is retributive, unreformative and does not get much further than reflecting the Divine vengeance to be traced in the legalistic heritages of Judaism. At the same time, shaped by derivatives drawn from the main sexual traditions in Christian theology, it is apt to look upon sex as a dirty word and to punish the offender merely as a defiant person who has gratified his evil lusts at the expense of society as a whole. Taking the story of *Lolita* as a model, the law overlooks in treating it the psychological state of the adult and the precocious sexuality of the "nymphet", a precocity against which the psychological state will afford no safeguard whatever. In fact, this has become so clear that some assize judges have taken the precocity into consideration when determining the penalties to be imposed upon the persons before them in the dock. Yet, even allowing for this, the gaol treatment of criminals affords no proper scope for psychiatry to attempt a deep cure. As a result, the offender will probably leave gaol uncured yet branded and defiant, a very dangerous rebel against the conduct-pattern accepted by society as a whole.

In this sense, the novel does provide a serious challenge. It is clearly the duty of society, when considering the greater good of the whole community, to inhibit activity which may poison child-life. Indeed, there is much to be said for the view put forward by Edward Carpenter many years ago in his *Prisons, Police and Punishment* that an indeterminate sentence should be imposed and that the person should only be released when he is cured. But this will demand that the place of detention shall be clinical and that its aims shall be purely curative. At the present time, society as a whole has not reached this point. Its morality is an odd mixture of derivations drawn from an older pre-scientific supernaturalism and from more modern utilitarian motives for behaviour. The need is for the steady rethinking of social morality along lines which shall assess the extent to which any conduct-variation is anti-social and shall meet the problems of personal behaviour with an accepted conduct-pattern resting upon a scientific basis and looking to scientific ends to provide remedies and cures. If it contributes something towards achieving this end, *Lolita* will not have been written in vain. But this end will certainly call for the jettisoning of much that has been derived from a pre-scientific past as well as for the ignoring of much subtopian conventionalism which merely befores the real issues at stake. Such an approach might do a great deal to mitigate very much human suffering by regarding the abnormal person as sick in mind. But it would also do much to bring about a cleaner society, clear-minded and

practical, where questions arising from individual psychology and its clash with social conduct-patterns have to be faced, analysed and treated from a scientific angle of empirical assessment.

*"Lolita" is by Vladimir Nabokov and is published at 21s. by  
Weidenfeld & Nicholson*

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## Correspondence

World Refugee Year,  
United Kingdom Committee

Dear Mr. Hutton-Hynd,

It is indeed good of your society to respond so generously to the World Refugee Year Appeal.

The Joint Honorary Treasurers have asked me to express their most sincere and grateful thanks for this magnificent contribution.

It is only because of the individual efforts by people like yourselves throughout the country that the appeal has been such a tremendous success!

Yours sincerely,  
Mrs. K. E. CLAY,  
Assisting Appeals Secretary.

## Obituary

The passing of an old and distinguished member took place when Mrs. Agnes Pollard died at the age of 92. She was the widow of Edward Pollard. Mr. and Mrs. Pollard first met when they were members of the National Secular Society and thus it can be seen that they were life-long freethinkers. A director of the well-known firm of shopfitters, Mr. Pollard was a member of the General Committee of South Place Ethical Society, his business acumen being consequently of great benefit to the Society. He was concerned in the sale of South Place Chapel and in the subsequent purchase of Conway Hall.

Mr. and Mrs. Pollard had many friends in the Society and Mrs. Pollard's kindly nature had endeared her to all whom she met; she was a life-member of S.P.E.S.

## Activities of Kindred Societies

### The Forest Group

July 3—Major G. Adcock: "Evolution and Human Purpose". Central line to Buckhurst Hill. 11.30 a.m. Lunch 12.30 p.m. at Tree Tops, Epping New Road. Tea at the Links Café, Chingford.

### **The Forest Group** (continued)

July 17—G. O. Furneaux: "The Welfare State—Good or Bad". Central Line to Theydon Bois. 11.30 a.m. Lunch at Forest Glen, Coppice Row. Tea at Bell Café, Epping.

### **Sutton Humanist Group**

Saturday, July 9, at 7.30 p.m., Red Cross House, 11 Park Hill, Carshalton Beeches. Clifford Quick (Osteopath): "The Meaning of Nature Cure".

### **Orpington Humanist Group**

July 10—Ramble from West Malling. Train, St. Mary Cray, 10.27. Change Swanley. Leader: W. Barker.

### **R.P.A. Conference**

The Annual Conference of the Rationalist Press Association will be held at St. Hilda's College, Oxford, from Friday, July 22, until Tuesday, July 26. This year's theme will be

#### **HUMANIST AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY**

and among the speakers are Professor P. H. Nowell-Smith, Mr. Victor Purcell, Mr. Olaf Drewitt and Mr. Ritchie Calder. Members of the South Place Ethical Society are cordially invited to attend at the reduced fee of £7 available to R.P.A. members. Further particulars may be obtained on application to the Secretary of the R.P.A., 40 Drury Lane, London, W.C.2.

## **Society's Other Activities**

### **The Library, Conway Hall**

The Librarian will be in attendance on Sunday mornings.

### **Young Humanists**

Meet on Mondays at 7.30 p.m.

July 3—Visit to Greenwich (Museum, Park, etc.). Meet at Conway Hall after the Sunday meeting.

Monday meetings will be held on July 11 and 18 only.



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Services available to members and associates include: The Naming Ceremony of Welcome to young children; the Solemnisation of Marriage; Memorial and Funeral Services.

For full particulars of membership, meetings, etc., apply to the Secretary, Conway Hall, W.C.1.