

SPES/6/3/11

Presented by
Mrs S. G. Green.



EA 1901

SOUVENIR
of the
Centenary Celebration

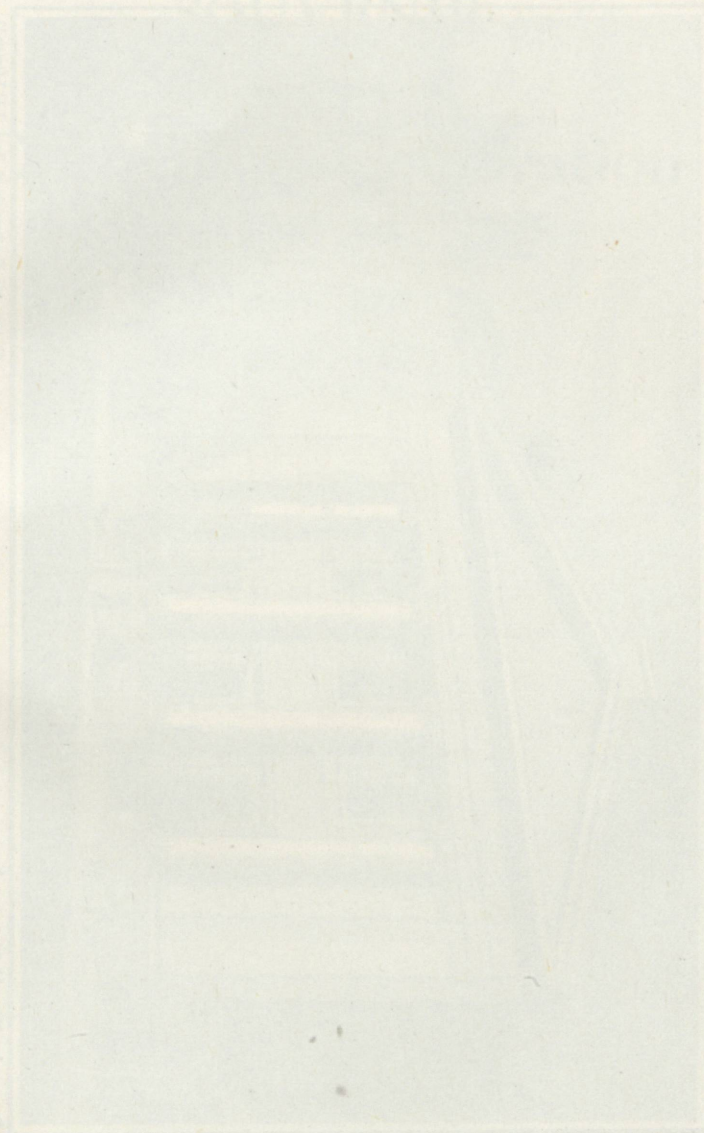


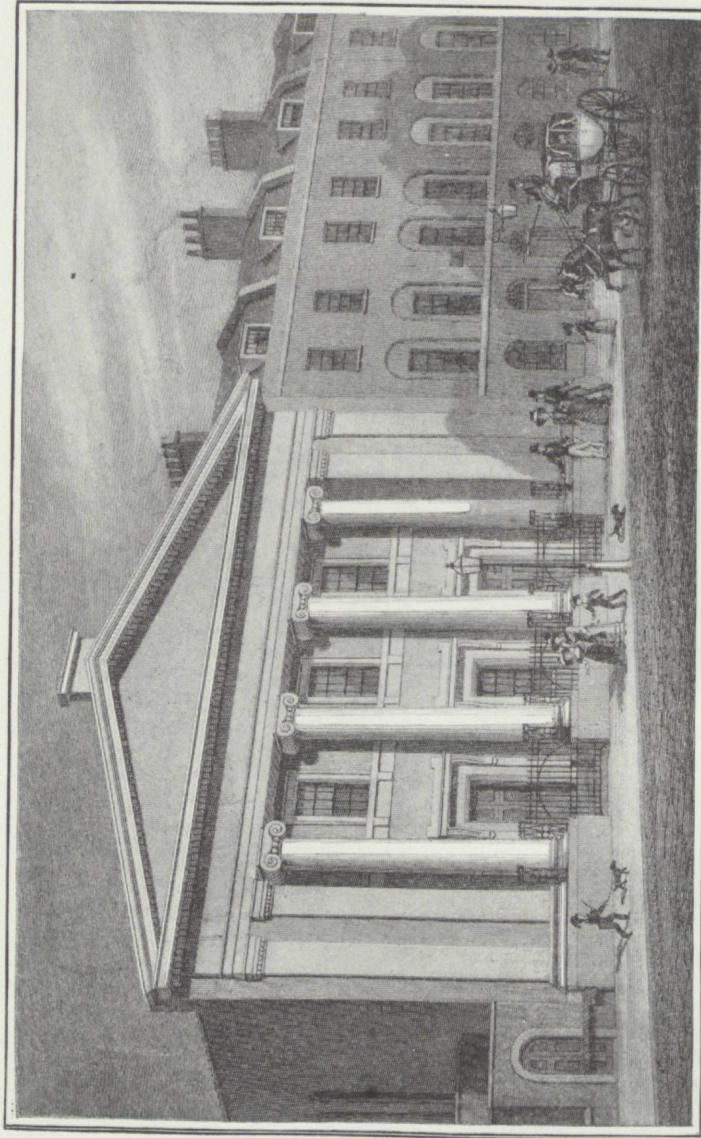
Of the Opening of
South Place Chapel
1824 February 1st. 1924

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY,
South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2.

Object of the Society.

“The Object of the Society is the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment, the study of ethical principles, and the promotion of human welfare, in harmony with advancing knowledge.”





Drawn by Tho. H. Shepherd.

From an Engraving by J.F. Havell.

THE UNITARIAN CHAPEL, FINSBURY.

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THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION
SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL
SOUVENIR

of the
Centenary Celebration



South Place Chapel

1824 February, 1st. 1924

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.

SOUTH PLACE,
MOORGATE, E.C.2.,

1st March, 1924.

We believe this Souvenir of the Centenary Celebration of the opening of South Place Chapel, 1st February, 1824, will be considered of permanent value, not only by the members and friends of our Society, but also by the many members of the public who, although unofficially attached to the ethical movement, are keenly conscious of the importance to the community of the cause of "free enquiry and the right of religious liberty."

The speeches at the Centenary Celebration, reported in full in this Souvenir, recall the trend and the activities of South Place Chapel during the past one hundred years. This glimpse of our history has interest not only as a record of the life of one individual Society, it has also a much wider interest owing to the fact that South Place Chapel, throughout the hundred years of its existence, has played a not unimportant part in the liberation of religion, politics and art from all forms of tyranny. In truth, as Mr. J. M. Robertson suggested, the history of South Place Chapel may not unreasonably be regarded as a history in microcosm of the general movement of liberal thought between 1824 and 1924.

The vivid and varied character of the speeches at the Celebration, the affectionate enthusiasm of the speakers, the bright and artistic decoration of the Chapel filled the meeting with a spirit of jubilation. The past history of South Place was recalled with pride, the success of the Celebration was self-evident, and our thoughts of the future were bright and hopeful. Deep gratitude was expressed for the good work of the past leaders of South Place, especially William Johnson Fox and Moncure Conway, also for the support given to the leaders by the Committee and general body of members, and the final general feeling was that the present members and the many friends of the Society must now band together and make a very great effort to increase its strength, both numerically and financially, and as an organisation, so that the traditions of South Place Chapel may be carried on worthily in the new home we propose to erect at Red Lion Square, Holborn.

One further valuable feature of this Souvenir is that it contains a verbatim report of Mr. J. M. Robertson's Centenary Lecture, "A Century of Religious Evolution," delivered at South Place on Sunday, the 3rd February.

C. J. POLLARD.

Editor, "The Monthly Record of South Place Ethical Society."

THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION

1st February, 1924

In commemoration of the opening of South Place Chapel, on the 1st February, 1824, by William Johnson Fox. The Celebration was held in the Chapel, which was brightly decorated for the occasion, a special feature being the display of the monogram "S.P.E.S."

THE CHAIRMAN, THE RIGHT HON. J. M. ROBERTSON, said: I have first to mention that letters expressing regret at inability to be present have been received from a number of distinguished men who have, in the past, occupied this platform. There is no time to read the letters. I will just mention the names of William Archer, Henry Nevinson, Prof. Gilbert Murray, Havelock Ellis, Sir Frederick Pollock, Bertrand Russell, Israel Zangwill, Laurence Housman, Edward Carpenter, Karl Pearson, Sir Frank Benson, and W. S. Godfrey. These do not complete the list of contemporaries who have spoken here, but you will all realise what a wide field of contemporary life and thought they cover.

We are met to-night for a very interesting commemoration, namely: the Centenary of the opening of this place. It was opened as South Place Chapel by William Johnson Fox one hundred years ago. You all know the earlier history of the Society, how it was started in 1793 by the American Universalist, Elhanan Winchester, whose successor, having been converted to Universalism by Winchester, converted himself still further to Unitarianism. In this phase of its existence the Society lost a good many of its Universalists, but was gradually built up by people of, perhaps, greater breadth of view under Unitarianism. It was on that line of development, carried on at the old chapel at Parliament Court, that Fox came in, and it was under the ministry of Fox that the old congregation of Parliament Court opened this place one hundred years ago.

Fox seems to me, on looking back, to have been a very important intellectual force through the whole of his life. He was, as you know, a man of great natural gifts of eloquence, literary faculties, and of liberality and depth of thought. Though he, like his predecessors, had been brought up in the strictest orthodoxy, as a Unitarian he was already advanced, even under that heading. Fox would seem to have been the effective founder of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and the word "foreign" in that title pointed to Fox's large views at that time. The old Universalism was a Christian Universalism, a predication of salvation for all. Fox's Universalism involved kinship in the theism of all religions. He accepted as reverend, Brahmins and other Hindoos, and, you may remember, Moncure Conway credited the famous Brahmin or Hindoo, the Rajah Rammohun Roy, with a determining influence in the founding of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

In all of those early phases of South Place, one characteristic stood out in the mental attitude of its congregations. Always, I think, they were strong for liberty of thought and teaching, and resolute in condemning all forms of persecution. That note was struck by Fox before the opening of this place, when he made a very memorable protest against the persecution of the old Deist, Richard Carlile, whose prosecution had actually been conducted by an orthodox Unitarian. Fox had no reserves in his faith in freedom. Not only did he stand out for the rights of Deists, protesting against their persecution: he equally protested against any form of persecution of Atheists. He stood out at the same time for the rights of Roman Catholics and Jews, and of, in fact, any body that was denied equality of rights in the face of the English Law.

I need not remind you how wide also was the influence radiating from this place under Fox, irrespective of his very large literary associations

and influence, an influence which must have widened when he became, as you remember he was, a very prominent Member of Parliament, one of the two great orators of the Free Trade Movement, in which Cobden was the representative rather of argument than of eloquence. You will remember how Moncure Conway has told us that, when he was in the United States at Washington in 1856, he found people drifting away from him, old friends, members of his congregation, leaving him because of his zeal against Slavery. He found there, in America, loyal support from men who had had their minds formed in England under Fox, and, later, in Cincinnati, when he had gone further on his path, and had estranged worshippers there also by some of his utterances on Supernaturalism, again he found friends and supporters among men who had been trained under Fox in England. Conway's testimony is that never at any juncture did he find those men who grew up under Fox flinch or fail in any crisis where it was necessary to assert the principles of liberty.

After Fox's retirement, and still more after his death, this place had lost its prestige. They were then thinking of closing it. Under a variety of phases it failed to retain its old influence, but a new life came in with Moncure Conway, who appeared on the scene in 1863. Of him it is hardly possible to speak in this place without a special warmth of affection. He was, I think, for most of us who are over 50, one of the great links with the previous generation, a link which he always kept living, inasmuch as he never lost his sympathy with the phases of the past that he had outlived. His personal charm was deeply bound up with his intellectual influence, and he, in his generation, was, I take it, as great an influence as Fox had been in his, in some ways possibly even greater—at least in respect to the fact that whereas Fox had undoubtedly kept his mind open to every new advance in scientific thought, Conway came into a period when scientific thought was advancing very much more rapidly, and he responded to the new advance at every point. No man could more worthily have fulfilled what we may call the South Place tradition—loyalty to freedom of thought and freedom of teaching, resistance to every form of tyranny of the mind. You will all remember how, when politics and thought were both moving very rapidly, Moncure Conway in this place stood openly and fearlessly on the side of Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, when they fought their battles for freedom of speech and for political right.

One of my own cordial recollections when I came to London well-nigh forty years ago, having cut away from all creeds and calling myself a Secularist, is that I found kindly and friendly hearing in this place. When I think of it, I and my friend Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner are among the oldest of the list of Associates of South Place, perhaps, here to-night. Well, since Conway's time, the Society has had its vicissitudes of experiment in various directions, but, I think, it has never deviated from its openness to new ideas, aversion for all forms of bigotry and of persecution, determination to keep an open mind for whatever time may bring to us. That was the history of the place and of the two great leaders of whom I have spoken. I think it has been its history down to this moment. In this respect I believe this old building, and what it stands for, are unique in the history of churches so-called. Within that century certainly many of the churches have modified their tempers—in fact, all of them, at least of the Protestant Churches—but not many of them have altered their creed. This Society always honestly stated the fact when it really departed from an old position. Fox abandoned the Sacraments. Conway tells us in an amusing passage how he told the Committee that he had to shape his prayers with great ingenuity in order not to clash with his own views and beliefs. The Committee considered it, and readily accepted Conway's suggestion that they should abandon the machinery of prayer in which they no longer had any serious faith, and substitute the device of a reading, which exists to this day. Under Conway, too, I think it was, that the pulpit became a platform, and the old high-backed pews were discarded as instruments of torture and superseded by such seats as those in which you now sit.

After its hundred years of life, South Place Chapel is not likely

to exist for many years longer as a place of public meeting and public teaching. The more fit is it that we should thus commemorate the Centenary. As regards the future, there can be no better prognostication than the expression of hope that its future will be worthy of its past. A hundred years of its mental life may be said to have been, as it were, a microcosm of the mental life of England through that century. We have here to-night with us a number of distinguished speakers, all more or less old associates of South Place. I will, therefore, not stand any longer between you and them, and will now call on our friend Mr. John Hobson. But I must not omit to express the deep regret with which we hear that Mr. Delisle Burns, who hoped to be with us, is quite unable to come owing to the state of his health.

MR. JOHN A. HOBSON, M.A.—It is with the deepest satisfaction that I find myself able to be present on this extremely interesting occasion. Now, when a thing is 100 years old, it is not necessarily interesting, not even if it is an institution. To make it interesting, I think it must be representative of a mood, a moving mind or soul, and it is that movement of thought and feeling of freedom which the Chairman rightly represented as the central fact of the life with which we are proud to associate ourselves. Those who listened to him, and those who have read the extremely fascinating little book in which our great predecessor on this platform, Dr. Moncure Conway, told the earlier history of this Society, know that there is some justification for our pride in this place, its institutions, and this Society as representing, more adequately perhaps, for a longer time than any other place in London, this powerful, passionate, enthusiastic sentiment for liberty and the toleration of thought, and for the active expression of thought and of differences of thought. It has been a source of gratification to me personally, during the quarter of a century in which I have been connected with this Society, on many occasions though I uttered opinions which I knew were not palatable to a large proportion of my listeners, to find that they were not deterred from listening to me, that they reserved their judgment as they had the right and duty to do, a judgment to differ from me. I hoped that they would retain intact that difference, not mitigated by anything I might say, excepting in so far as it recommended itself to their sense of reason and justice. So that you come back to the individual sense of reason and justice. The gathering of a people upon that basis, making a Society like this, is, I think, unique in the history of London and, perhaps, of this country.

It was a fascinating spiritual story that Dr. Conway told, how the makers, the earlier makers of this Society, Elhanan Winchester, Fox, and Conway, kept year after year, decade after decade, broadening down, not from precedent to precedent but from one newer and larger conception of spiritual life and its duty to another still larger and newer. And all that teaching was conducted, not in an atmosphere of mere abstract thought, for, what is remarkable in the fortunes of these men and this Society is the close contact kept with the vital, active movements in this country and this world. The atmosphere was not, I repeat, one of abstraction but of the struggle of history in its making during the Nineteenth Century—the great causes of Liberty, Catholic Emancipation, the Anti-Corn Law Movement, the Anti-Slavery Movement, the Movement of Toleration for Dissenters, for Deists, for Atheists, and the ever-expanding movement in the wider field of Politics—Nationalism, where Nationalism was a right and necessary move in the struggle of Nationalities for Freedom. Where Nationality passed those barriers and became Imperialism, then the spirit of South Place hardened against it, and our speakers stood out against this abuse of Nationalism. They stood then in favour of Internationalism, and not of Internationalism only in the sense of relation between one state and another state, one government and another government, but free association of peoples, which, perhaps, is more truly described by a term which has sometimes carried a certain atmosphere of reproof about it. I mean the term Cosmopolitanism. I do not think the makers of our Society would

have repudiated the term Cosmopolitan in the way in which it is repudiated by some people as if it meant weakening of their feelings and connections with their fellow-men. Everywhere, this history has been a history for the liberty of thought, of speech, and the Press.

It is important to bear that in mind at the present time, because I have been asked to speak of the possibilities of the future work of this Society. Now I would say that we stand to-day in danger of a new intolerance, an intolerance proceeding, not from one side only, in the movement of the political world, but from every side. A certain passion has upset the world to-day, which catches many people unawares, and makes them less willing than they were to listen to views and opinions and judgments which clash with their own. It is the very sense of the emergencies of the world in which we live which perverts the temper of freedom in many people who, on slighter occasions and in ordinary times, were quite the friends of Liberty.

The emergency in which we live now presents itself, of course, differently to different minds. Perhaps it presents itself differently to the older people and the younger. Many old or ageing people amongst us seem sensible of the *failure* of Democracy, the failure, perhaps, of the supports of Civilisation themselves, and even the possibility of the dissolution of Western Civilisation, the possibility put in a striking phrase of the late Lord Bryce in his last book, the possibility of a new Ice Age settling on the human mind. But there are other, many of them younger and more enthusiastic minds, in many countries, who see the Dawn of the New Era. A salutary optimism belongs to youth, but neither the old nor youths can view the present situation of the world otherwise than with consternation. War has ripened and revealed a number of discords and conflicts which, doubtless, were in existence before, but which stand out more plainly to the eyes of men. Politics, Industry, Religion, Education, these are the fields of strife, and not of some simple form of strife. In Politics, for instance, or Industry, we sometimes hear of "The Class War." There is not a Class War, because a War implies—mostly, at any rate—two opposite parties in conflict with each other. There is no Class War in that sense. There is no such clear-cut idea penetrating the minds of those who are engaged in Industry. It is the same in politics. The old Parties break up into a number of different sections representing new phases. And I need not speak to you about the way in which Religions form new sects.

All these pillars of society—Industry, Politics, Religion, Education—are shaken at one time, and there is a process which is necessary, no doubt, and which goes under the inconvenient name of Reconstruction. Recovery is what people crave at the present time. Now this Recovery, if it is obtainable, demands Social Control. It demands a kind of control which has never yet been realised in the world to any large extent, a control which is no longer dependent upon the great unseen, unconscious, mass movements of men, or upon the separate action of some single great prophet or great man. Social Control means something different from that, a conscious, rational, and distinctly moral control, for all these problems which beset us now are really moral problems. They are problems affecting the incentives that operate in the conduct of men and women. It is this settlement for which an ethical society pre-eminently stands. This Ethical Rationalism is what South Place stands for, has stood for in the past (so far as these ideas have prevailed) and stands for in the future if we are to contribute our share to the real recovery of the world. And not Recovery alone; we stand not merely for Recovery, but for Progress, and for Progress upon rational, moral lines. In that spirit our Society confronts the great emergent problems of our time. I cannot do more than name them in passing, such problems as centre around Population, the safeguarding of Democracy, the possibilities of new Industrial Organisation, the establishment of a Real Internationalism, and behind all these the renovation or the establishment of a reasonable system of Education, the means to all the other ends. These are problems, I repeat, of Rational Morality, that is to say of plain, individual, truth-seeking applied for the purposes of Human Welfare.

Reason is sometimes discouraged, but wrongly so, in the new psycho-

logy of which we hear so much. Reason is rightly understood as the supreme arbiter and regulator of all the instincts and emotions which contain the bulk of the driving power of humanity. Reason has to harmonise and govern not by pure rationalisation, but by an enthusiasm for right thinking. South Place history, as you have heard it, continually links up thinking with doing. We are not theorists or dreamers, or mere idealists. The great liberative causes to which allusion has been made have been real, concrete steps in the Progress of Humanity, and these causes of Social Reconstruction claim our undivided attention and energies at the present time. In London the place which succeeds this hall should be recognised from the beginning as a central power-house for clear, free thinking and for the enthusiasm of translating free thought into action. Some of us will be sad at the disappearance of this chapel, but we shall look forward in the hope of a joyful resurrection in Bloomsbury.

PROF. GRAHAM WALLAS, M.A.—The Chairman told us just now that his first visit to this room was forty years ago. I am a mere newcomer. My first visit here was thirty-eight years ago. I remember that the Executive of the Fabian Society decided in 1886 to make a big plunge by taking from the very tolerant people of this chapel the use of the place for a two days' conference on Socialism. We invited everybody, including the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation. Especially we asked Charles Bradlaugh, and Charles Bradlaugh came and disagreed with almost everything everybody said in the room, scolding us with a magnificent gusto. On the rather dull second afternoon, my friend Sidney Webb, preparing himself to be President of the Board of Trade in the future, read a detailed paper called A Socialist Budget. It did not entirely exhilarate the audience. On the platform, just where Hobson is sitting, was a representative of the Social Democratic Federation. He was a gentleman called Rossiter, who sold the harmless fluid called milk in Battersea, and was the most persistent red revolutionist I have ever met. Directly Webb's paper was over, he jumped to the front and said: "Damn your palliatives, I am a Revolutionist. I believe in barricades, bombs, blood in the street if you like. That is the only way to reach our ultimate goal!" In front, the audience were yelling with laughter, and he was utterly unable to understand what they were laughing at.

But, Mr. Chairman, while I am not so very old in my personal memory, I am something of a patriarch in my memory of a certain period of English history. When I was writing the "Life of Francis Place," I had to read an enormous mass of letters and newspapers and parliamentary reports dealing with the period of 100 years ago. It took me about seven or eight years. I was deferred to exactly as a man who had lived in that period. I remember Lyulph Stanley, not yet Lord Sheffield, who used to be our leader on the London School Board, saying: "Look here, what sort of man was my grandfather?" For that reason it has been suggested to me that I might, in a very few words, put before you what was the position of the world of thought in England at the time when this Society was established.

It really is a very remarkable thing that the foundation of this Society coincided with the beginning of the general Liberal Movement which marked England during the nineteenth century, and that the success of this Society, the immediate success, was very largely due to the coincidence of its formation with this movement. In 1824 we were nine years off the Battle of Waterloo, and the world was slowly recovering from the passions of the Napoleonic Era, and from the hatred and tyranny which followed the Napoleonic War. England had just definitely broken with that coalition of despots which called itself *The Holy Alliance*. When France marched into Spain and crushed the Liberal Constitution there, we had proclaimed, through the voice of Canning, that we proposed to call a new world into existence, a new free world to redress as far as possible the balance of the old. It was within a week or two of the foundation of this Society that the words of Canning reached South America, and were accepted as a general message of freedom to the world.

In that same year, for the first time, the English Government permitted

the formation of a Constitutional Government in Australia. In that year, Huskisson was President of the Board of Trade, and introduced a Reciprocity Bill which practically wiped out all the national selfishness of the protective Navigation Acts. In that year Peel, as Home Secretary, acting with the force behind him of the years of labour of Sir Samuel Romilly and Jeremy Bentham, abolished 100 offences for which the death penalty was imposed. For the first time there was a Criminal Law in England, which was anything but a scandal and disgrace to the whole country. In that year the Combination Laws, which forbade the formation of Trade Unions of any kind among the men (they allowed any kind of Union for the Masters) were at last abolished. When in 1892 Mr. Gladstone looked back upon his long life and association with Liberalism, he dated the coming of progress, as he understood it, in economic matters, from that event in 1824. "The Labour Question," he declared, "may be said to have come into public view simultaneously with the Repeal sixty or seventy years ago of the Combination Laws, which had made it an offence for labouring men to combine for the purpose of procuring by joint action and peaceful means an augmentation of their wages. From this beginning progress began." It was in that year 1824 that Ranke published his great history, and began, as G. P. Gooch has told us, a scientific interpretation of Europe's past record. It was in that year that Jeremy Bentham started the "Westminster Review." For the first time, men whose learning compelled respect from all, stood forth publicly to declare opinions which would have sent poor men to prison in droves ten years before.

In that great moment, a moment when the world, tired of war, tired of tyranny, turned towards the conception of kindness and liberty in that moment Darwin was a boy of fifteen, abandoning the weary course of Latin and Greek which taught him nothing, and preparing himself for scientific training and discovery. Gladstone was a boy of fifteen, learning to speak at Eton, and already deeply interested in the politics of his time. Tennyson was writing his first poems, and pointing the way to the form of thought and sentiment which we call Victorian.

We think now of the process of development of English freedom during that 100 years as being simple and easy. We have only to turn to the history of France, Spain, and other nations to realise it was not so. It was not inevitable, but freedom came because men and women were prepared to work and to suffer.

The 100 years are over, and these walls are to be pulled down in order that we may start again in another place. As I sat here, my eye was suddenly caught (with the recollection of the time when I was a schoolmaster teaching Latin) by those shields on the wall over there, on which is the monogram S.P.E.S. In a few moments I realised that it meant South Place Ethical Society, but *at first* it simply meant to me the Latin name for *Hope*. That fact, that SPES means both South Place Ethical Society and Hope, you may carry with you as a motto to your new home.

MR. HARRY SNELL, M.P.—In celebrating this great Anniversary of South Place Chapel, we are taking part in a tribute to a revered and very famous institution, an institution which, though it has had glorious achievements and is full of years, has yet, nevertheless, not grown old. It has remained young in spirit and active in endeavour, and, with a full century upon its head, is starting out upon a new adventure with all the glad assurance of those who first sat within its walls, and with that same endeavour, that same quest for a higher form of living that those people had who laid its first foundation stone.

It has not been the privilege of those with whom I am specially associated to have been in that close and constant contact with South Place that its own members and immediate friends have enjoyed. I regret, in comparison with Mr. J. M. Robertson and Prof. Graham Wallas, to be a mere infant as a visitor to this place, for what are thirty-four years in comparison with thirty-eight or forty? When I came to London in 1890, this was the place to which I came by a sense of natural gravitation. I think that what drew me here was that which has drawn visitors, seekers

after truth from all ends of the earth, whenever they have visited this great city in which we live. But my work, and the work of those with whom I am associated and for whom I may specially claim to speak to-night, has a name in other fields in our own great country. Nevertheless, the spell of this place has always been upon us, the spell of its prestige. Now that its venerable walls are doomed to fall, I cannot help expressing a feeling of personal pride that I have been on a few occasions permitted to add my name to the list of that worthy group of men who have preached within these walls. And what a group of men they have been, and for what fine ideals, after all, have they stood?

The South Place Chapel (or the South Place Institute, as we have learned of late to call it) has always stood for well-defined ideals. It has changed in the things it has advocated, but it has never been in any doubt as to what it stood for at any particular time. It has stood, I say, for well-considered ideals, for truth without fear or limitation. It has stood for the dignity of doubt and for the courage of dissent. It has stood for the Gospel of Human Worth, and for growth everlasting. In all its phases of development it has had those ideals quite clearly before its mind. There have been other churches, of course, whose members have held the tenets of their church with equal fervour to that with which the members of this place have held the facts that have been preached from this platform; but there has been no church in our country that has had such magnificent, such constant and splendid toleration as the South Place Church, or Chapel, has had. All that it has asked a man that has stood on this platform has been that he should speak the best truth that he knew. If a man was a spiritual outcast, an intellectual outcast, a creedal outcast from some other church, that seemed the best reason in the world why he should be invited as a guest here. It might be said of people of that kind, as Southey said of the refugee: When they touched this *platform* they were free.

I ask you to realise how magnificent has been the courage, the tolerance, the great reforming zeal of the Society, the Centenary of whose building we are now celebrating. Fox and his people stood, as you have been reminded to-night, for Catholic emancipation. They were not Catholics, but they knew that Catholics, as citizens of this Country, had rights and privileges equal to those of any other sect in this community. A great moral gesture, my friends, in times like this, a gesture which our Catholic fellow-citizens have never appreciated, and a gesture which they will almost certainly never reciprocate. Fox, and South Place Chapel, stood also for Church Reform. It seems almost impertinent in the days of Dean Inge to suggest that the Church ever needed reform, but in those days there were a great many reforms needed that I have not time even to enumerate to-night. But this place, almost under the shadow of St. Paul's, pleaded that, however wrong the Church might be in the doctrines it taught, at least it ought to be demonstratively clear. It ought to put in order its own house before it lectured other people too severely for their faults.

Dr. Conway, and his friends in this building, protested against imprisonment of people of this and other communions for refusal to pay Church Rates, and one of my first visits to this place was when I came to hear Dr. Conway preach and protest against the imprisonment for Blasphemy of Mr. Foote and his friends. It might be said that on those matters never has a false moral note issued from this platform. This community was the first to petition Parliament for the abolition of the Death Penalty for Theft. It was the first to protest against the oppression of women, and to plead that school instruction be given to the young of both sexes. When Fox was the Member for Oldham, he used his splendid powers of rhetoric, in seconding Hughes' motion, to try to persuade the House of Commons to agree to an extension of the franchise. One might go on, illustrating, by names of the men who have stood on this platform, the continuous endeavour that has been made to widen the opportunities for man and to remove political and social barriers to his development. The South Place Institute has been first in its revolt against tyranny, and bigotry and oppression. It has been first in the demand for wider opportunities for man. It has been first in its assertion of the principles of

freedom of thought and of expression. The old South Place is about to die; Long live South Place!

We are living in different times now from those when Fox began his work in this building. If he had to start his work afresh, I am not so sure that he would meet with the same success that he had 100 years ago. A few people would be loyal to him; they would rally round him and give their help and their trust, but the great majority would say: "Oh yes, he talks well enough, of course; he is sometimes interesting, but I have a Jazz Tea or a Night Club to attend, and I haven't time for things like that." We, speakers, were fated to be born after our time, and yet we do not lose hope about the future of South Place, for some day the people will rally once more to the spoken word, and if this Society carries on the traditions of the past when it moves into another neighbourhood, it will carry with it the elements of success. For if Civilisation is to go on, buildings, institutions, societies like this will be more and more needed. They will be required to stoke up the fires of moral enthusiasm which seem to die down so easily, and I hope that one great tradition of South Place will always be kept going. It will provide a hearthstone, an open door, so that the man who has anything to say can come there and say it. Let him not be cast out because he preaches something unpopular; let it continue to say, as it always has: "Let us hear what this new doctrine is whereof thou speakest."

It is not my business to advise those who are responsible for the future of this Society what they should do. I cannot help hoping that, in their wisdom, their opening Celebration of that institution will, at least, include a great Conference of all those who accept our principles or who sympathise and adhere to our way of thinking and outlook upon life, that we may use that as a great occasion for re-starting our movement, upon wide, and deep, and surer lines.

The CHAIRMAN, in announcing Mrs. Fletcher Smith, said: I know you will give a specially warm welcome to, I will not say "our old friend," for she never grows old, but to our ever young friend.

MRS. FLETCHER SMITH:—I have to speak of persons connected with South Place who were Members. It is very difficult to go back some seventy years and tell you all about them in ten minutes.

The first person who really affected me, who was a Member, was William Lovett. He sat over there by G. J. Holyoake's bust, and I was very much impressed by him. He was a Chartist, and had suffered in health through being in prison. He taught me to change my views entirely about Chartists. He was charming, a gentleman of the kindest. I do not know if anyone here knew him. Our Chairman knows all his history. He was an Educationist, and had classes at St. Martin's Hall. He taught on lines that Educationalists now are fumbling over. He was one of the kindest and gentlest of men.

I must say that I was here before he came. I was here in the old days that our Chairman spoke of when there was a Unitarian Minister, but I did not learn much from them.

The next person who interested me very much was Benjamin Ward Richardson. He was a genius, who wrote "The City of Hygeia." He was a most delightful speaker.

Then there was Alexander J. Ellis, a good man he was. What he didn't know about languages and music, I suppose wasn't worth knowing.

Then, in the early sixties, came Dr. Conway, who gave us what those I have mentioned were unable to do: the whole of his time and energy. His teaching and influence, with that of his charming wife, remain with me as dear and beautiful memories.

There was dear Mrs. Mansford, with her sons and daughter, who sat in the seat near where Mrs. Conway used to sit and hold her little Court on Sunday mornings. When we lost Mrs. Conway, Mrs. Mansford often received friends, and greatly I enjoyed talks with her.

Among other personalities, pleasing memories rise of Dr. Coupland, author of "Thoughts and Aspirations of the Ages," who gave us many

fine discourses, and who assisted in inaugurating the Conway Memorial Lectures.

William Sheovring, with C. W. Thies, was instrumental in starting Sunday Afternoon Lectures, and also originated the idea of "The Religious Systems of the World." The South Place Magazine was edited by W. J. Reynolds and John H. K. Todd. Mr. Theodore Wright edited the "Lessons in 1882-3 for the Day" by Dr. Conway. Mr. Clarence Seyler and Harold Seyler did splendid work for South Place. William Cockburn too. To H. G. Morris we owe our electric light, and to Mr. Marsh we owe our heating furnace. There was C. D. Collet, who worked to free newspapers from stamp duty. Mark E. Marsden inaugurated the Soirées, when the pews and pulpit were removed. John Lyon, who was among the earlier Members, was fined or imprisoned, I believe, because he protested against Church Rates. All did much towards the maintenance of our freedom, which at one time was in danger.

Peter Taylor and P. A. Taylor, his son, were both Members of Parliament, I think. Peter Taylor, with Charles Dilke and G. O. Trevelyan, always voted against Royal Grants. They were, I believe, for years the only men who did so.

Miss Emma Phipson founded a Girls' Club in South Place on the lines of Chesterton House Girls' Club. Miss Josephine Troup discoursed sweet music to us, and we miss her greatly. Then there was Robert Browning, and seeing him I wanted, of course, to read his works.

I always felt that some of the people who came to join did not come in the right spirit. They came with the idea: "Oh, that is not right; I must try and get them to alter that," instead of saying: "What a privilege it is to be received like this, and to hear what we do hear from the platform."

South Place has been to me an education and inspiration. It has been also to me a home, spiritual and social. It would take me all the evening to tell you the benefits I have derived from this place. I am very sorry the Chapel is coming down.

I cannot speak of those whom I see now here. I have spoken of those who have passed. Think what it has been for a young member to know all about those people. I may have left some out. I do feel that I cannot say enough of the influence that South Place has been to me for over seventy years. It has been delightful. "Keep your light burning!" Wasn't that the last word of Conway? I did not like to bring the book to quote, but — "Always keep your light burning" is what I remember in his Farewell Discourse.

MR. C. J. POLLARD (who was announced to speak as the representative of the Trustees and General Committee) said: The Committee of South Place Ethical Society, for whom I have the privilege of being the spokesman this evening, are exceedingly grateful to Mr. Robertson and the other eminent speakers. We greatly appreciate their friendship and their support. They have given us very valuable help in our Centenary Celebration in this "dingy old hall," as it was called last week, but since it has been in the hands of the Decoration Committee we cannot call it that. I have always preferred to call it our dear old Meeting Place.

To-night South Place is in jubilant spirit. We carry with pride the mantle placed upon our shoulders by the past, and we look forward with bright hopes to the future. This magnificent gathering is a stirring event and a splendid encouragement. Our history is being finely celebrated and our activities sympathetically recounted in the various speeches to which we have the pleasure of listening. The healthy state of our vitality is demonstrated by the glory of to-night's meeting, and the new South Place, in my vision of the coming years, beckons to us cheerily, basing its optimism on our doings in the past and on the evidence of sound life our present existence exhibits.

We are specially fortunate in having Mr. Robertson as our Chairman this evening. The views of many of us were influenced and clarified years ago by the writings of "J. M. R." in Charles Bradlaugh's "National Reformer" and in other journals. We must all feel stimulated by the

example of Mr. Robertson's continuous work all his life in the cause of "free enquiry and the right of religious liberty," to use the words of William Johnson Fox in his Opening Address in the year 1817 to our predecessors, the congregation of Parliament Court Chapel, Artillery Lane, Bishopsgate.

The duty we have now before us, a duty set in high relief by the glory of to-night's Celebration, is to carry on the traditions of South Place worthily, to make the best use of the inheritance in our hands, and to provide a new Home for the Society, a home which shall afford facilities for the full expression of our enthusiasm and the greatest opportunities for the extension of our influence. We are not a Society concerned to make money, but as Dr. Conway wittily expressed it, "Although money is not the one thing needful, it is one needful thing." In this connection our Society is more fortunately placed than other bodies. We have bought the freehold site at Red Lion Square, Holborn, on which we propose to erect the new South Place. The Trustees of the Society have in hand a nucleus, approximately, of £31,000, but this sum, although a large one, is not sufficient to build and equip the necessary premises for the fulfilment of our aims. We have not only to provide for our own Sunday Morning Services, Sunday Evening Concerts, Week Night Meetings, Social Functions, Library, Reading Room, Refreshment Room, and other offices, but we hope also to be in a position to offer suitable and worthy accommodation for Headquarters for the Ethical Movement, and a congenial rendezvous for visitors from the provinces and from abroad. In addition to the cost of providing these premises, we have also to consider seriously the question of an Endowment Fund. Without an Endowment Fund, it would be reckless to proceed to the full with our schemes, for, in all probability, we shall be subjected to severe financial stress in the transition period between leaving this Chapel and re-establishing ourselves in our new home with the largely increased membership roll which our much heavier expenses will demand. Nor would it be fair to spend all our capital and leave the Society without reserves. We, therefore, appeal to our well-wishers to contribute generously, each according to his means, to our Centenary Celebration Appeal Fund. I might mention, as a hopeful beginning, that one friend here, a Member of the Society, has promised the sum of £200. Also, I am pleased to say that our friends, the Ethical Union, have consented to co-operate with us in the issue of a further Appeal. To-night there has been a preliminary Appeal placed in your seats. We consider this Fund to be a matter of vital importance. If we obtain the amount desired, we can go forward with courage and with confidence. In helping us in this way, you may be sure that the Ethical Movement in England will, as a result, possess a Home whose influence will be a power in the land.

In conclusion, I wish to say, on behalf of South Place Ethical Society, that, although we must keep up our individual existence, yet at the same time we fully recognise that our possessions must be regarded also in the light of a Trust to be used for the furtherance of the whole Ethical Movement and of the whole body of Forward Religious Thought.

(A short interval then ensued for conversation and refreshments.)

The proceedings recommenced by

The CHAIRMAN'S announcement that a message from Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe had been expected, telling the Meeting something of the connection between this country and the United States, but that the letter must have missed the mail.

Miss Rawlings then read the following very interesting message from the daughter of Moncure Conway, Mrs. Conway Sawyer:

DEAR SOUTH PLACE SOCIETY,

New York, January, 1924.

Nothing for years has made me so unhappy as not being with you at this celebration.

I have always felt, that with the exception of my Mother, you at South Place knew my Father better than anyone. He came to you at

thirty-one years of age, and gave you the best that was in him. Each week he discussed with you the most important things in his mind, giving you his most mature and advanced thought, for he was a man who never stood still. I loved and appreciated him, as few did, but I was too young to realise his great brain, and he and I came nearest together, when on resting from writing, I would play him some melodies of Mozart, a composer we never tired of.

One of the astonishing things in my Father's life was the rapid and tremendous broadening of his mind. We who were brought up in comparative mental liberty can hardly realise how long it takes to get cut of mental ruts; but think where my father started. He writes in his diary in 1851:

"Aug. 11—Went to Sandy Springs. In the afternoon went over to Roger Brooke's. We spent the evening conversing on Theology. I was perfectly fascinated with him."

And later he goes on to say that Roger Brooke asked him what he would do if he found that the Spirit didn't meet him next day in his pulpit, and Papa replied:

"I should think God's arm wasn't shortened that he could not save, nor his ear heavy that he couldn't hear, but that my iniquities had separated between Him and me. So I should pray until he came."

Again on Aug. 31:

"Had a charming Love Feast. I felt full of the Spirit. I spoke under the Spirit. Afterwards I was much affected by Brother W—coming and putting his arm around me and saying, 'O, Monc, I didn't know how much I loved you till I heard you say with tears in your eyes, 'I feel so feeble.'"

Again Sept. 7:

"A great crowd on the Camp Grounds. All got wet, it rained all day. Preached in a tent in the afternoon. Had a mourner."

Very few of us to-day were born in such narrow dogmatic paths, and here is the same man writing in 1904:

"The Freethinker is that man who welcomes every teacher, but calls no man master."

"They accept the facts of science, but science can give them nothing final, the seeming solid facts of to-day may be all flouted by new facts discovered to-morrow. We cannot, therefore, compete with the organisations founded on dogma. Those are for people who have adjourned their lives to another world. The freethinker considers only the world he is in, he has all the heaven there is and aims to make the most of it."

He often used to say to me, "Don't try and take away anyone's belief from them if it makes them happy, but if anyone is in doubt or trouble, help them to see the Truth." His doctrine was, "Live and let live," and he preached every day what he thought to be the truth, even if it contradicted what he had preached the day before. And don't forget his Motto:

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man."

(Signed) MILDRED CONWAY SAWYER.

MR. F. J. GOULD.—I think, Friends, what I have to say might almost take the form of a story. Not far from here, in Holborn, a lecturer, very eloquent and very instructive, used to address crowds of working men from time to time. A great many of them were Chartists. He talked of Science, Politics, Poetry—very often of Poetry—but every now and then he gave a most excellent lecture on Education. He was a man who advocated compulsory Secular Education. We had Education compulsory in 1870, but not Secular. This was in 1845, and this was the sort of thing he told the working men. "In all countries," he said, "the object of National Education should be to form the Man and the Citizen." I do not think we could very much improve on that statement of the object of Education to-

day. As against Clericalism, he said: "I object to Sectarianism in Education." And then he used this illustration in support of his thesis: "All Education for all Citizens should be open. We all have the enjoyment of the free air of heaven. Education is also a social and natural right and blessing. Education for all will be a victory more glorious than Trafalgar or Waterloo, better than Parliamentary Reform, better than the Emancipation of Slaves, for it will be the Reform of Society and the Emancipation of the Mind." That Lecturer was William Johnson Fox. At the time that he spoke to the working men at Holborn, he had been Pastor of this Chapel twenty-one years. A few years after that he became M.P. for Oldham in Lancashire. Three years after that he brought in a Bill for Compulsory Secular Education which, of course, did not pass, but that showed the spirit of the man.

Just at that very time, in the United States, the notables and fathers of the State of Virginia had assembled together to frame what they called a New Constitution for the State of Virginia. One of the topics that very much exercised their minds was that of Education. It was suggested that Education should be free. A great many, I think, were opposed to that. This was in 1850, just at the time when William Johnson Fox was endeavouring to persuade the House of Commons to pass his own Bill. A young man of eighteen brought out a pamphlet, a young man of the Dickinson College. It was a very good pamphlet, very well written. It was in favour of the free education of the children of Virginia. Amongst other things, he mentioned the agitation that was going on in this country. "Here are crowds of people in Manchester, Leeds, Derby, and York, all willing to support Mr. Johnson Fox, the Member for Oldham. Why should we not take the same line here?" This young fellow of eighteen made this excellent statement, suitable for Socialists (and I don't suppose a single individual here will object): "It is the interest of every member of the community that every other member thereof should be educated." That was really excellent. That young fellow, aged eighteen, who was teaching the fathers of Virginia their duty in social progress, was Moncure Daniel Conway. That was before he became a Methodist Minister.

In 1863, as you have already heard, he came over here, and, of course, interviewed William Johnson Fox, who was then about seventy-seven years of age, the year before Fox died. Moncure Conway leaves this very vivid picture of his old friend. He is speaking of William Johnson Fox as he met him in 1863. "A beautiful and gracious old man he was, with winning face, soft eyes, flowing white locks, remaining a picture in my memory, but, had I known as much of him as I know now, I would have clasped his knees." So Conway spoke of Fox. He very nobly carried on the great traditions of this Society. That was the most brilliant time that Free-thought had in this country, I think. I remember, somewhere about 1884—I was a Board School teacher then—I used to take a walk from the school I was engaged in at Bethnal Green. One morning I had the "Daily News," and it took me all the time to read the most excellent report of a lecture on the History of London given on this platform by Dr. Conway. It nearly covered a whole page of the "Daily News." I hope the interest in Red Lion Square will be great enough to get as ample space as Dr. Conway did.

The subjects that were dealt with in this place practically covered everything that interest mankind—History in all its innumerable phases, the Emancipation of Slaves, the Emancipation of the Human Mind, the Sunday Opening of Institutions, public institutions like the British Museum and the National Gallery. In that movement Conway was associated with the late Dean Stanley. As to Art, Conway's words are constantly coming back again. Once he almost became flamboyant in his poetical reference to human nature. He used the Darwinian phrase, spoke of life as a "struggle for existence," a sort of turbid stream. Then, said Conway, "In that turbid stream of struggle for existence, he is drowned who is not held up every day by communion with Beauty." It was very characteristic of Conway.

As to South Place Lecturers, apart from Conway, I can only just mention a very limited catalogue: Max Müller, Tyndall, Huxley. Perhaps

the greatest of the topics of those times was that of "Religious Systems of the World," afterwards published in a very admirable book, and lectures on National Life and Thought. Then, I think that in February, 1883, I sat down there, and heard Mrs. Besant lecture here on Evolution in some sense, the Darwinian sense as far as I recollect. Conway presided on that occasion forty-one years ago.

Of course, the United States has never forgotten Conway, nor was he forgotten by the people connected with his old college, Dickinson College. A rich man gave the necessary money in order that a hall might be erected in Pennsylvania in memory of Conway. He said he would only supply it if it was called Conway Hall. He said he did that in recognition of Conway's great services in the realm of Letters, of Reform, and of Humanitarian Effort. I think that simple phrase very suitably describes Conway's career in both America and England.

I may just mention one personal reminiscence. On one occasion Conway and I did speak together, not on the brilliant eminence of this platform, but at the reading desk placed below the platform. A crowd of children were gathered from the various Ethical Sunday Schools from all over London, including a little group of Socialists from Mrs. Gray's class at Battersea. As far as my memory goes, it was the year 1896 or thereabouts. I cannot remember what was our particular subject that morning, but I guess every child who was there—some may be here this evening who were present on that occasion, and who would be grown up to middle age now, of course—will remember Conway's look and the spirit in which he spoke. He spoke admirably out of an admirable soul. As I remember him I can see him now. It seems to me he was shaping in his old age in a way which recalled his own description of William Johnson Fox. His serene face and flowing white locks remain a picture in the memory. Conway was a first-rank Humanist. He had a noble message for people of mature minds and for young people.

The Chairman then called upon "My old friend and comrade," MRS. BRADLAUGH BONNER, who said.—It seems to me this evening that this platform is somewhat in the nature of a confessional box. As that is so, I am afraid I shall have to content myself with coming into the veteran class, because my first year of definite recollection of South Place dates back fifty years. In 1874 it was arranged that a six nights' Debate should be held between my father and the Rev. Brewin Grant at the Bow and Bromley Institute, and Dr. Conway kindly consented (he had been ten years Minister of this Chapel, as it was then) to take the chair. When the fifth evening came, however, speakers, and chairman, and audience were assembled, but they found that the doors of the Bow and Bromley Institute were closed against them. In consequence of this, fresh arrangements for debate were made, and it was through the generosity of Dr. Conway and the broad-mindedness of the South Place Committee it was fixed that that Debate should be held in this hall in the following year. Now that debate, on its own merits, deserves to be forgotten. I have however, great pleasure in recalling it because the fact that South Place should open its doors to my father and the reverend gentleman who was chosen to represent Christianity, when other doors were closed against them, was a typical example of one aspect (to my mind, not the least valuable aspect) of the spirit which has prevailed in South Place right throughout its history.

It is on that point that I have been asked to say a few words this evening, although I must confess that previous speakers have taken many of the flowers from my basket that I should like to have showered upon you. William Johnson Fox came to South Place in 1824, 100 years ago. He brought to it a passion for liberty, for freedom, for defence of free speech. He was a Unitarian. He was not a Freethinker; he was not a Rationalist in the modern sense of the word, but we, who strive to do work in the cause of Rationalist propaganda, can never forget that Fox sat throughout the whole trial of Richard Carlile for the publication of Paine's "Age of Reason." Having heard Carlile's defence, and having heard the verdict delivered, but before the monstrous sentence was pronounced, he, from his pulpit, gave a discourse in protest at the prosecution of Richard

Carlile. In that discourse he publicly declared that all shades of opinion should have free expression, no matter whether the speaker was Christian, Deist, or Atheist. He further said that there was no medium in principle between the liberty of all and the tyranny of some. That is the keynote of the spirit which prevailed at South Place throughout its history, and it is that spirit which seems to me so valuable a part of its work.

Just as we always remember that Fox publicly protested against the prosecution of Richard Carlile, so also we remember that his much-loved successor, our dear friend Moncure Conway, in his turn protested publicly against the sentence which was passed on Mr. Foote.

It is very easy to talk in praise of free speech. To talk in praise of free speech is common enough, but South Place in its history has done more than talk. It has practised as well as preached. It has been here no case of an empty benediction, of a passing lip-service of praise, but any speaker who had a message to bring might be sure that in this hall he would have a courteous and kindly hearing. If his message was unpopular, then all the more reason why, in this great city of ours, there should be one place where he could count upon being listened to attentively without interruption. That does not mean that the Committee of South Place were in agreement with the speaker; not at all; but they held, as they still hold, that there should be a free platform for all shades of opinion. The platform should be free for the decent expression of every shade of opinion, whatever it may be. It has been carried out in that way all through its history—because South Place has held, and still holds, to its desire, to its *practice* of the right of free enquiry, but it has also felt that you can have no free enquiry worth having unless you are also willing to give opportunity for full and free utterance to the answers to those enquiries. In consequence, speakers and thinkers who have been excluded elsewhere, could always count upon the hospitality of this platform. There has never been any bar of any kind, no bar of colour, creed, class, or sex, provided the speaker had his message to bring.

To me it is a matter of profound interest to look back and to note some of the causes that have been pleaded in this building. Probably the very earliest advocacy by Indians of the movement for social and political reform in India took place in this hall, advocacy voiced by such speakers as the Rajah Rammohun Ray, Keshub Chunder Sen, and by that most admirable man and eloquent pleader, whom many of us will remember, Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

India was fortunate, in that she could send her sons to plead her cause. Africa, less fortunate, found for its people defenders, or those who could voice their appeal, in their English friends. I do not know whether Dr. Colenso ever came here. I think not; but most certainly his daughter, Miss Harriet Colenso (whom I am proud to claim as my friend) came here and spoke on behalf of the dispossessed Matabele, Mashona, and Zulu people, people who found in her a pleader, and to whom she and her sister devoted their lives. There was another woman who also spoke on behalf of the native Africans, another friend of mine, Miss Alice Werner, to-day Professor of Swahili at the School of Oriental Studies.

They were not the only women who have spoken here. Not many have spoken of the women this evening. Nevertheless, right through the History of South Place, either for Sunday Services or for public meetings from time to time, there have been women speakers here. If these walls could speak, they would tell us of the charm of Frances Wright, of the terse eloquence of Ernestine Rose, of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, of Julia Ward Howe, of Mrs. Annie Besant, of other speakers nearer our own time whose names will occur readily to your minds. In Mr. Fox and Dr. Conway women always found staunch friends, ever ready to support them in their legitimate aspirations and to encourage them in their work.

So for 100 years, South Place has kept the flag of free speech flying, and never more splendidly than in times of storm and stress, when we hardly dared to think freely, much less speak openly. There must be many of you here this evening, some of you at any rate, who can recall the period of the South African War, when it was almost impossible to get a hearing for that stream of facts that was so necessary to throw light on

the origin and conduct of that war, when a man, such as Mr. Schreiner, was denied a hearing on any public platform save here, where his discourse was listened to from beginning to end without the least disturbance. This record of 100 years, a record without break or stain in defence of free speech, is a great heritage, and one of which we might all be intensely proud, no matter whether our part was great or small. We owe an immense debt to William Johnson Fox for having laid down that principle of liberty of speech for all, and to Dr. Conway and those associated with him on so consistently applying that principle.

Now the time has come when South Place, as we have known it, will be no more, but the older workers of South Place feel justly proud in handing over that heritage to the new generation, and they do it in trust and confidence that the new home will prove that central power house, of which Mr. Hobson spoke, from which will emanate new streams of ever-increasing good work such as has gone on before.

MR. R. DIMSDALE STOCKER.—I feel it to be a great privilege to speak to-night on this memorable occasion. I have been asked in these remarks to deal with the poetic associations of this South Place Institute. I shall attempt, as far as I can, to comply with the request. It may not be known by everybody who is present to-night that among those who sat at Fox's feet were Thomas Campbell, Leigh Hunt, Macready, the actor, Harriet Martineau, Helen Faucit, and Robert Browning. All those, and many other literary personages, were in the habit of listening to William Johnson Fox in this place, and we must remember that Fox was a man of the greatest literary gifts. In the capacity of Editor of the "Monthly Repository," he gave the most practical encouragement to poets. Among the contributors were Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymers, Harriet Martineau, and Robert Browning. In the Life of W. J. Fox, Richard Garnett writes "Poetry claimed a considerable share of the 'Repository,' which, for a time, might almost be described as the rallying point of the young writers of the period." That was high praise. Browning, we must remember, was brought into prominence through W. J. Fox. Browning contributed five poems to the "Repository." He was reviewed by Fox, and actually secured publication for "Paracelsus" through Fox. Through Fox, Browning obtained an introduction to Macready, and this resulted in a commission to write the play "Strafford," which was produced at Covent Garden Theatre on May 1, 1837. Browning very frequently referred to Fox as his father in poetry, surely a most fitting designation.

But Fox, we must remember, was no mere patron of poets. He had his own gifts, and when the Hymnal was compiled in the old days of Sarah Adams, the work of Literary Editor fell to his lot. Out of the 150 pieces which were selected for that compilation, eleven of Fox's own contributions were included. Many of these are still sung:

"Make us a god, said man."

"A little child in bulrush ark."

"Jews were wrought to cruel madness."

"Praise to the heroes who struck for the right."

I doubt whether the solemn pride of moral enthusiasm has ever found greater expression than in that last poem.

Mention of the Hymnal recalls the revered names of the sisters Eliza and Sarah Flower. Richard Garnett speaks of Eliza as the most distinguished woman composer of her day. Sarah Flower, who subsequently became the wife of William B. Adams, is well known as the author of "Nearer my God to Thee." Moncure Conway wrote in his Autobiography that he believed the sisters inspired Browning's "Pauline" and "Pippa Passes," and Robert Browning greatly influenced the Rationalism of South Place, and, incidentally, the keen orthodoxy of Sarah Flower Adams. "Sarah Flower"—I am quoting from the Autobiography—"aspired to her God, not everybody's God; but everybody is now singing the hymn ('Nearer, my God, to Thee'), so many years heard only in our chapel. And perhaps not one who sings it realises that it was written by a disbeliever in Christianity."

We come next to Moncure Daniel Conway. It is difficult to approach Dr. Conway from the point of view from which I am speaking, because one realises that so much of his poetry was expressed in the personal contact between himself and the people he met. Anyone reading the Autobiography realises that it is, from start to finish, a poetic account of his experiences, his terrestrial pilgrimage put into the most beautiful language. But several of Moncure Conway's poems can be read, and among them we must make mention of his—"A storm sped over sea and land" in the Hymns of Modern Thought—I think still sung as an anthem here.

Besides writing verses, we must not forget that Moncure Conway rendered valuable services to the cause of Art, not merely services of appreciating Beauty, but of actually doing battle with the adverse forces against Art in life. He was instrumental in getting the Art Galleries open on Sunday, and Sunday to-day is different from what it was when Conway carried through the task he had set himself. Conway equally believed in the power of the drama in fulfilling the work that he had in view. He felt that the drama could do much that, perhaps, eloquence could not do. Then again we realise with what appreciativeness of the Arts Conway was endowed, what practical work he did in support of the magnificent efforts made here to promote the cause of music. South Place stands celebrated for its beautiful music, and Mr. Wallis Mansford wrote to me, I well remember, about Mr. Conway attending with his family the 50th Concert.

Another well-known figure at these concerts was, of course, Miss Emily Josephine Troup, a most accomplished musician who took an immense interest in our music and movement, and wrote music to poetry. She will be recalled as a gifted pianist, and she became, in Conway's time, what the Flower sisters had been in the days of Fox.

I fear this survey, so incomplete, does scant justice to the idea that I had in mind. I must, however, conclude it.

I should just like, before I bring these remarks to a close, to ask: What do the things I have been trying to say suggest? What does this association between the cause of Art and the cause of Freethought really mean to us? Does it not mean, friends, that the cause of Rationalism and Morality has been promoted as much by the culture of the emotions and the elevation of the feelings as by the development of the intellect? Does it not mean that to think rightly you must learn to feel rightly? Does it not mean that if you are to have elevated thoughts, you must begin to have that quality of feeling which will enable the mind to grow and develop? It is quite true we Rationalists talk of Religion as needing the searchlight of honest thought, a genuinely ethical basis. We no less need in our Religion a more adequate sense of Beauty. Whereas people are driven out of the churches, not only by the bare, unintellectual appeal of the dogmas, but by the hideousness of the old faith, it has been the privilege of those who have ministered here to present, not only a more intellectually satisfying faith, but in every way a more beautiful faith, a more lively faith, a more joyous faith. How much the world owes to the labours of those who have striven in this place, animated by the angel heart of man to make men not only more thoughtful and more sincere, but to make them more responsive to the appeal of Beauty. Truly you have had with you here men who have realised this need, men who are aware that sweetness as well as light is necessary for man's life.

You are leaving this chapel, but, remember, the spirit of poetry will enable you to re-create your life, to make it richer, to make it better, to make it more beautiful, if only you carry with you this thought of poetic Beauty united with Truth, and you know that the soul of South Place is not in crumbling walls but in the rich endeavour, the heartfelt, sincere lives of those who are privileged to work together as Members of such a community.

Mr. Fenton then read the following message from MR C. DELISLE BURNS, M.A., who, through illness, was unable to attend:

THE NEW SOUTH PLACE.

To plan the activities of the Society in its new building seems like giving it pre-natal existence; for the Society will certainly have a new birth when it is established in Red Lion Square. It will be much more in the public eye. Its tradition will therefore make a new appeal, and will be interpreted in terms of the need of a new generation.

The right to reason out for ourselves whatever solution is possible of the fundamental problems of life has been secured. Christian doctrines have been submitted to criticism even by those who profess Christianity; and no sane man would now deny that reason is the test, as it has always in fact been the source, of true belief. We do not stand for any particular conclusions. We stand for the method and attitude of reason, which governs conduct as it guides thought. We are free now to reason and to act upon the results of reasoning, in a way in which our forefathers were not free.

The new South Place must show what can be made of such freedom. It must be the centre of inspiration for a new and finer type of civilisation than that supported by the Churches. The civilisation of the West, which is sometimes called Christian, is dominant in London and England to-day; but its critics are many and its defenders are in full retreat. Whether its chief defects are due to the decrepit forms of ancient religion or to the mere emptiness of the appetite for wealth and power, civilised life seems to lack that spontaneity and happiness which earlier civilisations had.

There are two characteristics of the new spirit which is now rising up against the dominant creeds and customs. First, intelligence and intellectual vitality are given a place which they were denied by Christianity. I do not see why we should "suffer fools gladly." The fools have never reciprocated that treatment. There will always be, of course, people who are looking about for something foolish to believe. Let us tell them to go away and play and leave the arts, the sciences, religion, and politics to us. I do not mean that we are more intelligent than other people—only that we value intelligence more. Among the most glaring omissions of the Bible and the doctrine of the Church is the omission to mention the duty of each man to think for himself.

A second characteristic of the new spirit is a frank attention to "externals." I at any rate have had enough of spirits without bodies. We want colour and light and sound. The grace of form and the rhythm of bodily life go to the make of the new religion which is, therefore, if one may use a misused word, "pagan." The new South Place must be a centre for the arts as well as for the sciences. In experimental practice we must work out the sort of surroundings and the sort of intellectual atmosphere in which the mind can feel rejoiced to be free.

The CHAIRMAN, before calling on Mr. Wallis Mansford, mentioned how much the Society owed to him, and said that he had taken endless trouble in making the manifold arrangements needed for that night's celebration.

MR. WALLIS MANSFORD.—I thank the Chairman for his graceful words, and will only say in reply, that my work in connection with the Centenary Celebration is only one more labour of love for the Society to which I am so much indebted, and to whom I owe more than I can ever repay.

It is my pleasing duty to record, on behalf of the Committee and the audience, our very hearty appreciation to our Chairman, the Readers and Speakers for their very helpful and inspiring contribution to our Centenary Celebration.

I would remind you that our programme in connection with the Celebration of the Centenary of South Place Chapel does not end with to-night's function. On Sunday morning next our Chairman will give the Centenary Celebration Discourse: "A Century of Religious Evolution,"

and the words and music of the hymns and anthems will be associated with the names of W. J. Fox, Dr. Conway, and the sisters Flower. In the evening there will be a Concert, consisting of Music composed or published in the year 1824. A Centenary Souvenir is in preparation, and in March next Professor Graham Wallas will give the Conway Memorial Lecture, taking for his subject: "A study of W. J. Fox."

But that is not the end, for five and twenty years ago, when acting as Secretary at another function organised for the purpose of freeing the Building from its Mortgage Debt, my old friend and teacher, Moncure Conway, then residing in Paris, wrote me as follows: "People will say to you: 'Why take so much trouble over something that will only last a short time?' Persevere in your task. Remember what Goethe said to the lady who wondered whether it was right to bestow so much time and pains on a dinner party which is so soon ended. 'Madame,' said the poet, 'a beautiful thing never ends!'" If this can be said of a dinner party, how much more will it apply to our Centenary Celebration, which, we hope, will live in your hearts and minds for a long time to come.

The CHAIRMAN, in reply, said.—It remains for me, in the name of myself, and of all the Readers and Speakers, to thank you for your very kind Vote of Thanks, and to express the reciprocal pleasure with which they have attended this evening.

The following Cables were received from:

Mrs. MILDRED CONWAY SAWYER, New York.

Love and best wishes.

Mr. FELIX ADLER, New York.

The American Ethical Societies send cordial greetings and sincerest fraternal wishes for your continued growth and power.

and the following Letters from:

Mr. WILLIAM ARCHER.

I am afraid I cannot speak at the celebration on February 1. For one thing, I shall very probably be abroad. And, for another thing, even if I am in England, there is nothing I can say that would not be better covered by some other speaker. I am sorry.

Mr. HENRY W. NEVINSON.

So many thanks for your invitation to the celebration on February 1. I should like to come, but it is so uncertain whether I shall be in London that you must not count on me, please, to speak.

Professor GILBERT MURRAY.

If I were a little more free, I should greatly like to take part in the celebration of the Centenary of the South Place Chapel, but I am afraid I am thickly engaged all through this Spring, and must not take on any more speeches.

Professor KARL PEARSON.

I must thank the authorities of the South Place Ethical Society for their very kind suggestion that I should take part in the celebration on February 1. I regret very much that it is not possible now for me to do so.

I very much appreciate my old connection with South Place, where I gave one of my earliest public lectures in 1880, a meeting which was more memorable for the speech of a young red-haired Irishman, later known as G. B. S., rather than for the lecture I gave.

With the best wishes that the South Place Ethical Society may survive another centenary.

Mr. EDWD. CARPENTER.

I take the Society's kind invitation to speak as a compliment, but my strength and health nowadays are too uncertain to allow me to accept the proposal. I wish, however, all success to the Centenary celebration. With kind regards.

Sir FRANK R. BENSON.

I take it as a great compliment that you should ask me to address you. I shall unfortunately be just commencing my dramatic tour in the provinces on the day you name, so that I shall be unable to have the honour and the pleasure of speaking to you. All good wishes.

Mr. EUSTACE CONWAY, New York

Both my sister and I are very interested in both of your projects (Centenary Celebration and the New South Place), and will do what we can to assist, but it does not seem that there is much that we can do on this side of the water beyond sending our good wishes and thanks.

Mr. PERCIVAL CHUBB, St. Louis.

Your letter of December 2 just to hand; and I hasten to say that I shall be glad to do what I can to send your way any outstanding American within my reach who may happen to be in London on February 1, when you are to celebrate your centennial. Of course, that event will interest all of us—myself in particular. While it is not true that I was actually a member of the South Place Society myself, it was for some time my Sunday-morning place of pilgrimage, and I still have my old hymn-book and one or two pamphlets.

I am sure our Societies will care to send you greetings, and I will take steps at once to that end. Meantime, with all seasonable good wishes.

Dr. HENRY NEUMANN, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. Chubb has told us that your Society is to celebrate its one hundredth anniversary in February.

May I express to you, for the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Ethical Society, our gratification at this fact? Your Society has had an honoured history; and it is our wish that its tradition of service may be ever richer as the years go by. Numerically our Societies are small. Our work, however, is needed in the world; and if we make it our main concern that the seed we sow be of the right sort, we can go forward, as I am sure South Place Chapel will, with renewed strength. Our warmest good wishes go out to you!

Mr. GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM, New York.

My friend, Mrs. Mildred Conway Sawyer, whom I have known since she was a little girl in her father's household, asked me yesterday whether I might possibly be able to be in London in February at a time when, she reports, a meeting is to be held in honour of the memory and the work of my good friend, Moncure D. Conway.

I am going to London, D.V., in April next. I told Mrs. Sawyer that I could not possibly arrange to make the journey in February. I should have been very glad to have the privilege of saying a word in regard to the noteworthy services rendered by Dr. Conway to thinking and reverent citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. If Dr. Conway's work could have been carried into the 20th Century, it would have been better understood and would have secured appreciation from a very much larger circle of thinking hearers and readers. He was a scholar with a real reverence for the things of the spirit. It was his contention that the influence of essential truth was interfered with by the legend which had

been accepted as dogmas and which, even in these later years, were still hampering with the spirit and the action of mankind.

I trust that Conway's work is being carried on by other leaders who possess some measure, at least, of his courage and intellectual force.

I am with best wishes for the success of the Commemoration Meeting.

Mr. W. S. GODFREY, Bournemouth.

DEAR MRS. FLETCHER SMITH,

I duly received the notice of next Friday's Celebration, but being ill and away from town, I shall, much to my regret, be unable to attend. I should like, however, to be allowed to send a word of greeting, with my very best wishes for a successful meeting and for a second century for the Society of even greater progress and prosperity than the first.

My association with South Place dates back to Dr. Moncure Conway's days, so that I may claim to be one of its older friends. I always think of it with pleasure and with gratitude, for I have listened to more wisdom discoursed from its platform—often to thin but always interested congregations—than I have heard in any other Chapel or Church I ever entered. May the new building soon arise, and worthy successors come along to fill the places of those who through the past 100 years have so splendidly held aloft the torch of reason in a benighted world. I am proud to have occupied occasionally the South Place platform. My last public utterance, and what will probably prove to be the last of my life, was delivered there in September, 1921. I am so glad to see that you are to take part in the proceedings on Friday, and to gather from this that you are still in good health. I am addressing this letter to you, because your name has been associated with South Place ever since I first knew it. With kindest regards,

—Yours very sincerely,

W. S. GODFREY.

A CENTURY OF RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION

A Discourse Delivered at South Place Institute by
The Right Hon. J. M. ROBERTSON
on Sunday, 3rd February, 1924.

What Fuller called "centenary solemnities," at a period when "solemn" had not yet come to mean "sombre," are not merely interesting but potentially profitable experiences. If we will take the trouble to realise them, they help us to realise the nature of the process of things. In the modern past of our own country, immune from violent social change, though a great war can profoundly alter routine for the time, no two successive days, broadly speaking, have perceptibly differed as regards the totality of their beliefs, their theory of life, their use of language and literature, their physical environment. And yet, after a century of years, our nation has passed from aristocratic rule to popular Government, from a persecuting orthodoxy to a state of opinion in which orthodoxy professes to fear persecution; from the life of stage-coaches to the life of railways and underground tubes and wireless broadcasting and the omnipresent automobile.

In what we may call the social process, on its mental side, there is far less of sudden and vital change than in the life of the individual. He may in a few weeks or months give up his inherited creed, embrace a new ideal, make a new friend who influences all his thinking: he may suffer a bereavement which may profoundly alter the lighting of his life, an illness or an accident which leaves him a changed man. But the totality is not, as such, so affected. The aggregate undergoes no transfiguration, no sudden or swift conversion, no analogy to bereavement. It changes insensibly. And yet, after a hundred years, the aggregate is less like its former self than many an individual may be to an individual ten decades back. The South Place Society is one of the witnesses, and one of the illustrations.

In 1824, South Place Chapel, newly built, was opened on February 1 as a Unitarian place of worship by the famous orator, preacher, and politician, William Johnson Fox; and already both the preacher and the Society which stood by him had undergone a rather rapid religious evolution. The Society had taken form as early as 1793 under the ministrations of the American Baptist preacher, Elhanan Winchester, who cut across orthodoxy by renouncing and assailing the doctrine of Eternal Hell, thus founding or helping to spread the creed, so-called, of Universalism, which then meant simply "Universal Salvation in Christ." In his native land Winchester had in his youth been an orthodox Baptist preacher, being brought up sound in the Calvinistic faith. One day, (1) travelling in New England, he met a young woman who returned to his doctrine of future damnation for the non-elect the answer that all must be saved: she "beheld infinite fulness in Christ for all mankind." Winchester refuted her with texts, and they went their several ways, never to meet again. But he was then only twenty years old; and the doctrine of universal salvation (perhaps because it came from a maiden's mouth) took root in his heart, and soon converted him.

He was the eldest son of a mechanic near Boston, who named his fifteen children out of the Bible—the boys out of the Old, the girls out of

1 See the account by Moncure Conway in his *Centenary History of the South Place Society*, 1894, ch. 1. There is an American biography of Winchester by E. M. Stone, 1836.

the New Testament—and he had become the leading Baptist preacher in Philadelphia. That post he had to renounce when he turned Universalist; and in 1787 he came to make a new career in England. Already the wound of the Revolution War was so far healed that his nationality caused him no trouble; and he set about delivering men from the fear of hell-fire. After five or six years of miscellaneous preaching his Universalist adherents in London built or purchased for him the Parliament Court Chapel, in Artillery Lane, and thus founded the Society which, after various internal vicissitudes, settled in South Place Chapel thirty years later, under W. J. Fox.

Those early Universalists called themselves "Philadelphians"—not after the city of Winchester's former pastorate, but after a text in the Apocáypse. They were not, under Winchester, Unitarians. He was so far from meddling with belief in God that he never made any trouble about the Trinity. His great task in life was, so to speak, to undermine belief in the Devil; and that was then quite as hard an undertaking as it has ever been since to wean men from Theism. We have, indeed, his individual testimony to the effect that he found John Wesley strongly inclined, in private conversation, to the Universalist view; but Wesley never published any such avowal; and when he died, in 1791, it was Winchester's function to defend the great sect-founder against the theological malice of the zealots of the Establishment who proclaimed that he had "passed into the lake of fire." We may note that thus, from the first, the Society is identified with the spirit of Tolerance. Never has it lacked, and never, let us hope, will it lack speakers to bear witness against bigotry and all the works thereof.

Winchester had to return in 1794 to America, and was expected to come again to England, but died in his native land in 1797, whereafter his place was filled by the Rev. William Vidler, another ex-Baptist, who had been converted to Universalism by Winchester. Editing "The Universalist Miscellany, or Philanthropist's Museum, intended chiefly as an Antidote against the Anti-Christian Doctrine of Endless Misery" (1797-1801), he was led into dialectic exercise with the result of becoming, after much hesitation, a Unitarian; and at once there was made clear the fact that for most Universalists Universalism had then but one dimension. The congregation melted; and as Conway put it, "Denial of the Trinity cost this Society £320 per annum." A new community of Unitarians had to be built up, which substituted an "open communion" for the so-called "close communion" that had subsisted on Baptist lines in the Philadelphia body; and that name was now abandoned. Vidler, like Winchester, had the gift of eloquence, and when he died in 1816 he had won a high status in the Unitarian body. It is worth remembering that he framed a vindication of Judas Iscariot on lines which have been taken to be quite new in our own day—representing that mythical personage as having aimed not at betraying but at forcing his Master to put forth his power. Like Winchester, Vidler had spent his life worthily, as Conway put it, "in merely clearing away the dogmatic rubbish for the foundation of a rational temple"—a statement in which, two generations later, Oliver Wendell Holmes acquiesced as a description of the religious history of himself and many of his personal friends. "Elhanan Winchester," writes Conway, "was even a man of genius, yet no pamphlet of his has now any religious value, so concentrated was he on the then vast discovery that divine punishment is not eternal."

It is another way of reminding us that those steps in conjoint or congregational evolution were necessarily made on emotional as distinguished from philosophical promptings. Winchester was converted by a young lay-woman; and he, a feeler rather than a thinker, converted in Vidler a kindred spirit, though Vidler was praised as a close reasoner. There is no trace among their adherents of any one who saw the intellectual absurdity or the scientific lunacy of the doctrine of eternal torment. Such thinkers there must have been: but they stayed away from church and chapel, or, if for prudential reasons they went thither, held their tongues about their beliefs. Robert Burns, in Winchester's generation, clearly leant

to Winchester's view, beginning with a humorous tolerance towards Satan himself which perhaps tended to countervail for a time the poet's beneficent influence in the way of undermining bigotry in Scotland. But Burns remained a conventional Deist; and wrote that "An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange For Deity offended," which must have done much to put him right with all who made their God in their own image. Humane emotion made the Universalists revolt against the doctrine of Eternal Torment; a stirring of pure reason developed Unitarianism, from roots of theistic thought (labelled Arian and Socinian) in the old theological world, partly fertilised by the airs and dews of eighteenth century Deism, and permitted to grow by the political accident which enabled a number of heretical Presbyterian congregations to subsist under Trust Deeds, subsidised by the will of Lady Hewley in 1710.

In the year after the opening of South Place Chapel, there was formally established a Unitarian Association. This was made possible by the repeal in 1813 of the old penal laws against anti-Trinitarianism, a concession made by the authorities to a form of heterodoxy which was careful not only to protest its entire devotion to the monarchy but its detestation of the active deism which had taken on a new popular life after the French Revolution under the vigorous impetus of Thomas Paine. Thus when, in 1819, Richard Carlisle was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, and £1,500 fine, for publishing Paine's "Age of Reason," it was a Unitarian who conducted the prosecution. And then it was that W. J. Fox showed the metal he was made of by delivering a discourse which, in the words of Conway, "shines as the one religious candle in that dark time." Alone, I think, of the reverends of the time, he denounced all persecution of what was termed "unbelief." "There is no medium in principle," he declared, "between the liberty of all and the tyranny of a particular sect. Christians, you kindle a flame in which yourselves may perish." The narrower Unitarians angrily protested; but Fox's congregation on the following day passed a resolution expressing "the high degree of satisfaction with which they heard the manly, energetic, and argumentative discourse delivered by him last evening on the duties of Christians towards Deists, and earnestly requesting him to publish the same."

Such was the moral and intellectual quality of the man who inaugurated South Place Chapel, and of those who followed his teaching. Already, by his eloquence and his fervour and faculty, he was beginning to be a power, and on the day after his inaugural discourse it was announced at the commemorative dinner at the London Tavern that every seat in South Place Chapel was engaged. Thus far, Fox was quite orthodox as to the Bible, which makes his stand for tolerance the more laudable. Brought up an orthodox Dissenter, starting in life as a weaver-boy at Norwich, and trained at the Protestant Dissenting College at Homerton, he had taken years to reach the Unitarian position, and had, like his two immediate predecessors, to part with his orthodox congregation when he invited them to follow him, as Emerson had to part with his Unitarian congregation when he invited them to substitute a rational for a theological view of the Christian sacrament. Fox in the end travelled perhaps further than Emerson did; and yet there is nothing to show that, apart from the dissensions over his management of his domestic troubles, he had any difficulty in carrying the mass of his congregation with him. He and they thus played a representative part, as his and their successors have done since his time, in that gradual advance which has interpenetrated large sections of religious life in England with the spirit of critical reason, to the point at which this platform has become unrestricted by any dogma, or any tradition save those of sane decorum and amenity and humanity. Buildings, like books and men, have their destinies.

When we recall the social, political, and intellectual aspects of English life a hundred years ago, the transmutation becomes impressive. Stirrings of new life there were in many directions. Aggressive freethought was guaranteed against obscurity by chronic prosecutions, promoted by Wilberforce and his pious associates; Robert Owen, the most benevolent of all

aggressives, was reaching the working masses on a larger scale than even Paine had done; and in very different circles a more philosophic impulse was preparing minds like John Stuart Mill and George Grote for their tasks. But still the mass even of the educated were wholly docile to orthodoxy; and what figured as new religious influences were new Christian formulations. Edward Irving was for the moment the outstanding figure in that order of innovators; though Irving sat at the feet of Coleridge, whom he revered. And for more than twenty years to come, the new sensations in English life were those of religious conflict, variations of dogmatic belief, oppositions of sect, and sectarian politics.

The Catholic Association in Ireland was formed in 1823 and suppressed by law in 1825 for a term of three years. The Catholic Relief Bills of 1821, 1822, 1823, and 1825 were all carried in the House of Commons and rejected in the Lords, by no great majorities. In 1829 the measure was at length carried through; but the religious malice which had so obstinately delayed it remained unappeased, and the Irish political tragedy went on its weary way.

When, then, the so-called Tractarian movement, arising out of the Romeward tendencies of John Henry Newman and his coadjutors, progressively convulsed the English ecclesiastical world, it did so because the antagonism between Protestant and Catholic animus was a main element in the national life. The mental difference between then and now may be measured at this point by trying to imagine any storm of opinion over any individual's choice between Anglicanism and Romanism in our day, when the Churches are seriously parleying about Reunion, though even coy confabulations between Anglican and Catholic dignitaries to that end evoke warnings that it would break up the Establishment. It is no longer a matter of warm national concern, save in that aspect.

A hundred years ago, England was in the main dogma-ridden. High Church and Low Church, Evangelicalism inside and outside the Establishment, pietistic propaganda of all kinds, missionary enterprise, Christian Evidences and Christian Education—these were everywhere outstanding themes. Unitarianism was the position of advance within the religious field occupied by a small and relatively thoughtful and cultured minority. The great reaction against the French Revolution had ostensibly revived belief: certainly it had revived religiosity and the prestige of orthodoxy. Of the Deism which had been more or less fashionable from the day of George the First down to 1790 there was left, indeed, a considerable remnant, now broadly fringed by the new democratic and definitely anti-Biblical Deism so powerfully propagated by Thomas Paine. But the prevailing aspect, the ascendant power, was that of piety and bigotry.

Yet all the elements of a new progression, a new dilution of traditional belief, were present. Even in *belles lettres*, there were the usual signs of instability of faith among the poets—a feature of our literary history from Chaucer onwards. Shelley had scandalised in turn the university and the literary world. Even Wordsworth, after his renunciation of his youthful revolutionary ideals, remained visibly much of a pantheist; Coleridge, after many changes, including a swing to Unitarianism, satisfied only a minority as to his Germanic orthodoxy; Keats, then little regarded, was certainly no devout Christian; Sara Coleridge said of him later that he had no religion; Byron was known to be skeptical. In a work published in 1830 by James Kennedy, an army doctor, entitled "Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron and Others," we find Byron on the island of Cephalonia in 1823, listening, among others, with an astonishing patience to the exhortations and dehortations of an extremely satisfied and extremely tiresome exponent of Christian Evidences, who modestly demanded to be listened to for twelve hours without challenge or interruption. The company seem to have been mainly Deists, like Byron; and neither their complaisance nor his was quite equal to the strain, though he remained on very friendly terms with his mentor. The outstanding facts are that Byron avowedly wished to believe in Bible Christianity, but found irremovable difficulties in so doing; and that the champion of the faith claimed to prove his case by "the most rigid logical

demonstration," the truth of the Scriptures being in his opinion "as susceptible of demonstration as any proposition in Euclid."

It is safe to say that no defender of the faith in our own day who had education enough to know his Euclid would dream of taking up such a position. Long since, the defence has fallen back upon appeals to emotional assent, to "spiritual experience," and to a general allegation that Christianity is vindicated by its influence on civilisation. This stress on the evidence for Christianity in its adaptation to spiritual needs had been laid by Coleridge as early as 1824. But at that period, probably, even the Unitarians in general stood upon miracles; though the influence of Priestley, to name no other, had tended to set up a belief in universal causation, which went so far as to put what was called the "necessarian" aspect on all human actions as well as upon all natural processes. We see this attitude in the Martineau family, James and Harriet having alike been brought up in it, though Harriet in her youth held by her Sabbatarianism at the same time.

James Martineau's later withdrawal from the necessarian position is one of the many proofs that the course of true philosophy no more runs smooth than that of true love. On the one hand, Necessarianism, or Determinism as we now call it, is always troublesome to humane Theism, though Luther and Calvin, like Augustine, had no difficulty in reconciling it with theirs. Thus we find Lucy Aikin, writing in 1831 to Dr. Channing, confessing that though she had long before found the determinist argument irrefutable, she was unhappy about it. "I now begin to *feel* against it," she writes; and she goes on, very much in the manner of Lord Balfour in our own generation, to protest that "We cannot well believe in God without expecting that He will sometimes come, as it were, to an explanation with us." Before that temper philosophy has small chance. James Martineau leant more on ethical grounds; but we may broadly say of his recoil from determinism that it stood for an inability to see that, as held by those who understand it, it in no way affects the spontaneous play of will, choice, moral judgment, inasmuch as the rational determinist regards his reasoned choice and preference as, for him, equally the latest fulfilment of the Cosmic movement with all the other processes of Nature. By exercising our reasoned will, so to say, we pull our weight in the universe; and the scientific recognition that we are conditioned by the past and present is no more frustration of our moral action than is our knowledge that we move under the law of gravity a paralysing of our capacity or our desire to move.

But that can hardly be reckoned a common philosophic perception in our own day; and in Lucy Aikin's it must have been much less common still. Only let us remember that she was substantially at the standpoint of Lord Balfour, as when she writes: "Could there ever have been a good man without a Maker of Man infinitely superior in goodness?"—never dreaming that the argument involved the corollary: "Could there ever have been a bad man without a Maker infinitely superior in badness?" and the resolution of the dilemma in the philosophic conclusion that goodness and badness alike are not predicable of the Infinite. In fine, we have here one of the many cases of identity of attitude in individuals separated by a hundred years of an evolution which has so altered the standpoint of multitudes of others that theirs constitutes an outstanding feature of difference between the two ages.

And this gradual and general shifting of the balance is what has taken place over the whole field of religious opinion, philosophic and non-philosophic alike. The small minorities of a century ago have become the large minorities or the majorities of to-day. It is really hard to say whether the majority of so-called educated people to-day do or do not believe in miracles. All that is certain is that an immensely larger percentage now disbelieve in them. And so with the beliefs in salvation by blood and by faith, in scriptural inspiration, in a bodily resurrection, in a physical hell and heaven, in the divinity of Jesus, in the sinfulness of unbelief, in the damnation of the heathen, in inherited depravity, in theocratic election, in a governing Providence, in a Personal God, in

angels and devils, in prayer and fasting, in the Apostolic succession of bishops, in the duty of the State to punish blasphemy so-called, in the divine and punitive purposes of earthquakes, storms, pestilences, wars, and individual accidents, and all the rest of the strange mass of ignorant affirmation concerning the unknown which our ancestors built up for themselves or had built up for them, and sought to lay upon the shoulders of posterity.

Every one of these beliefs is still held by multitudes in our own country as elsewhere. What has changed is the balance of intellectual and social prestige. For every rationalist of a century ago there are a hundred, perhaps a thousand, to-day. Bigotry has become impotent to persecute by criminal procedure, save in police cases in which indecency is indicted as blasphemy; though beyond question the avowal of rationalism can still be a grave disadvantage to a man, in some environments, both socially and commercially. Among educated people, acting as such, it is no longer a likely experience to hear any one condemned as an "infidel"; and in any educated company, even of churchmen, there are pretty sure to be disbelievers in many if not in all of the list of doctrines I have given as once part of orthodox Christianity. And of this process of transmutation every stage, every aspect, has been either recognised or promoted by teaching delivered from this platform during the centenary period we are considering.

To estimate the relative influence of all the factors at work would be an undertaking beyond the power of our immature sociology. But by common consent the development of the natural sciences has counted for much in the transformation. It might have been supposed that the eighteenth century expansion of astronomy would alone have had a checking effect on anthropomorphic religion; but it seems rather to have encouraged resort to the Design Argument. "The undevout astronomer is mad" was a much applauded line. To-day, taking "devout" in the sense of believing in a personal God, in a physical heaven, it would be more plausible to say that the devout astronomer is mad. It is pretty clear, however, that the mere multiplication of scientific studies had the same tendency to promote rational thinking about all causation as the study and practice of medicine had proverbially done even in ages in which medicine was but feebly scientific.

And whereas in 1834 we find a treatise on Christian Evidences, by the Earl of Rosse, setting out by denying the eternity of the universe, it would be hard to find even an Earl to-day at that standpoint. The pious Earl evidently felt that the conception of unlimited physical continuity, though held by Aristotle along with a belief in Deity, was logically inimical to the Christian faith. And, at that stage, to ascribe eternal duration to a world visibly in process of change may have seemed to some as unpalatable as others found the doctrine of creation. But the balance of opinion began to shift heavily and steadily as soon as the doctrine of Evolution began to find wide acceptance; which it did as soon as Darwin made his memorable opening with his *Origin of Species*. The conception is to be traced to German and French speculation of a previous generation, in which Germany at least exhibited a more progressive intellectual life than that of England. But it is only after Darwin's production of a concrete doctrine of the evolution of Species that the idea takes firm and lasting hold of thinking people in general and naturalists in particular; with the result that the long rationalistic attack on the Hebrew cosmogony carries the day. Thenceforth the doctrine of the Fall, with the super-imposed doctrines of Salvation and Damnation, have only a dwindling status even for churchmen.

By the time of the advent of Darwinism, Fox had become rather a politician than a preacher, though he never wholly abandoned his work as a lecturer on religious history and on morals. Fox was a whole man, in a measure by reason of the bracing and toughening experience of his youth, but also in virtue of the native sincerity which made him master of a style at once natural and skilful, the self-expression of a lettered man not magnetised by literary tradition. If only he had completed the Auto-

biography of which he left a fragment, it would, I fancy, have been found at least equipollent with that of Newman. As it was, his function throughout his connection with this place was to guard his hearers vigilantly against all manner of narrowness, to keep their minds open to new truth whencesoever it came, and to see it that the bias of religion should never be allowed to make God-worship a barrier to human sympathies, as he saw it often to be around him, even in his own denomination.

It is sound historical method to note these influences of individuals on their time. An inconsiderate asseveration of the all-importance of great men by one-idea idealists led Buckle, and has led many since, to insist that the influence of the prominent individual is illusory; that he leads by following; that it is the general movement that counts. But movements are made by men; and there are the furtherers, the inspirers, as there are the passive participators. That is how we know movements: there is no more justice in cancelling out the promoters than in cancelling out the mass who, as such, give effect to the leading given them. In all the thought movements of the past century forceful men have been visible forces. Thomas Paine, the two Mills, Bentham, Fox, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Colenso, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Arnold, Strauss, Renan, and a host of less eminent but energetic men, made opinion among the mass, among the thinkers, among the specialists, among the students, on the lines of their special power of appeal; and there resulted a progressive mutation of belief in all classes alike. Even in his pulpit period, when his audience was, as he said, a restricted one, Fox was a centre from which liberal thought radiated in many directions.

After an interval of years, in which the appeal of a salient personality was lacking, and its prestige greatly dwindled, to a point at which absolute stoppage was contemplated, there came to Fox's place another American pilgrim, Moncure Daniel Conway, who had already, in his own person, made the advance from orthodoxy to heterodoxy, and who had the same radical bias in respect of a vital interest in public affairs. The young preacher who in his native land had seen slavery buttressed by Biblical texts and doctrines was committed at once to finding human sanctions for morals, and to seeing in all religions alike the workmanship of man. Thus it came about that every advance in scholarly or scientific scrutiny of the problems on which orthodoxy laid down its law found in Conway an eagerly receptive student and interpreter; and the persuasive charm which was his in a special degree, a charm compounded of feeling, humour, sympathy, knowledge and literary skill, made his influence as dynamic as had been that of Fox.

After seven years' tenure of this platform, he summed up his course in the book entitled *The Earthward Pilgrimage*, a phrase which tells at once of his personal experience and of that of his age. The prologue is headed: "How I Left the World to Come for That which Is." It was a record of a shifting of values, a gradual discovery that sound ethic is homocentric, not theocentric; and that the religions held as revealed from the skies are no less the work of men's hands than those discarded and condemned on that very plea. Fox's hymn: "Make us a God, said Man," gives the cue for the whole transition. And for Conway, as for Fox, there was no indissoluble dogma, no unmodifiable doctrine save the law of loyalty to truth and to the good of humanity; though Fox remained always nominally a Theist, whereas Conway at length abandoned the belief in a controlling Moral Providence.

To-day the number of listeners in this place who were taught by Conway is still, I am glad to think, considerable; but we, too, are of the passing generation; and in the 26 years since he finally withdrew from the platform the process of change in opinion has been continuous as before, though less striking to the outsider's eye. Perhaps the decade of maximum disturbance of orthodox opinion in England in our time was that of the seventies, which opened with Conway's *Earthward Pilgrimage*; and already in that decade the influence of Conway brought to his platform avowed freethinkers, avowed atheists. When once the *Earthward Pilgrimage* has been realised for what it is, all serious thought is on a new footing of

intercommunication for those who have gone even part of the way; and differences of opinion come to be felt as but differences of temper towards the past. Neither Fox nor Conway ever approved of Disestablishment, and both framed good arguments against it. Theism, again, survives as a sentiment with some who have rejected it as a dogma. And whereas the controversies of last century round the name of Christ were broadly between those who affirmed his divinity and those who affirmed his humanity, the open controversy is latterly over the question of his historicity. It is probably true that the Unitarian standpoint is now widely held in the churches which are nominally Trinitarian. To my knowledge, the latter include a few at least who have abandoned even the belief in the historical actuality of Jesus. But the bulk of opinion is probably now at the sixty years' old standpoint of Renan's Life of Jesus; and any advance from that to a challenge of the historic existence is still commonly viewed with more confident derision than Renan himself bestowed upon it. Yet there, too, "it moves"; and at a time when leading Unitarians affirm that the view is "completely exploded," it is finding new scholarly exponents.

Progress in these fields of opinion is never otherwise than that of a slow tide. In 1839, Lucy Aikin wrote to Channing: "A learned but heretical Cambridge divine tells me: 'This generation of us *think*, the next will *speak*.'" That prediction was hardly fulfilled to the letter; but it has been largely fulfilled in our own time. Concerning the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, Professor Robertson Smith, writing about 1890, summed up that "In the period of thirty years ending 1860, of the fifty great authorities in this line, four to one were in favour of the Johannine authorship. Of these, one quarter, and certainly the very greatest, finally changed their position to the side of a later date and non-Johannine authorship. Of the new critics, two-thirds reject the traditional theory wholly or very largely." Still more complete, of recent years, has been the reversal, largely through Robertson Smith's own work, of the traditional view of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament.

And when some professed rationalists are found confidently and even violently rejecting other innovating views, we do well to recall how in the history of Biblical scholarship it has repeatedly happened that professed rationalists resisted critical advances which were being made by professed supernaturalists. Some of the old rationalists fought for the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle to Timothy, when evangelicals declared that it could not be maintained; and stood for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch when otherwise orthodox scholars had disproved it. It is not surprising, then, to find professed rationalists in our own day scouting Van Manen's thesis of the spuriousness of all the Pauline Epistles, and other radical theories, which even some churchmen support. But, again, let us remember, the innovating theory is not as such necessarily true: confidence in these matters is a fruit of slow growth; and the wise rationalist will doubt guardedly, and keep all views open to revision.

The vital thing is just openness of mind, the rejection of dogmatic certitudes on matters of inference from partially doubtful data; the readiness to admit that doubt rationally arises when cause is shown; the avowal that our wisest mental state is a consciousness that we are seeking for truth, not that we have finally found it in an unalterable guise. What we call truth is itself like every other aspect of the cosmos, in a state of eternal development. Science, so-called, modifies under our eyes; and so it is with our science of human things.

It is, I believe, the honourable distinction of this Institute that it has kept such views of truth before its members during the hundred years that have now elapsed since its opening. Step by step, it has modified its formal creed, denuding itself of dogma, giving a hearing to all new thought considerably expressed, expressly setting ethics above creeds, constantly taking account of all serious discussion of social and national problems, caring above all things for freedom of the spirit in the study of them. And as between this place and the vast majority of places of worship so-called, the distinction is still notable, much as their practice

has latterly modified in the direction of a more tolerant discussion of innovating views.

If the Institute is in any other respect less conspicuous than it was when Fox and when Conway were its teachers, it is assuredly not due to any recovery of intellectual prestige by the creeds which they put aside. If the old formula about "the religion of all sensible men" were to be reduced to any practical specification, it would probably be found to come nearer the prevailing views of this place than to that of any creed-limited church. When, twenty years ago, Mr. Hardy wrote in the preface to his *Dynasts* that "the abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusions to the First or Fundamental Energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same," there was no such scandal as was evoked when, thirty years earlier, Morley in his book on Voltaire spelt "God" with a small "g." Within the Church of England itself there has grown up an organisation avowedly aiming at the rejection from its creed of all Biblical elements recognisable as historically and scientifically false. The difficulty for those reformers is to say where the line is to be drawn, and what portions of the Christian creed will be left. An old Scotch divine, highly and widely and justly esteemed in his day, avowed to me not many years ago that he and an old schoolfellow, also a man of high ecclesiastical repute, had recently surveyed together the changes that had taken place in the theology and belief of their time, and had declared that the whole aspect of things had so vitally altered that they felt themselves in another world than that of their youth. All the old landmarks, he declared, were gone. If that were true of Scotland, it must be true to a large extent of England, however the South may lag behind the North in logicity.

And perhaps one of the most significant results of the transformation is just the relative latter-day lack of interest in religious problems in general. What has emerged, say some shrewd observers, is not so much unbelief as indifference. And indifference is perchance a more serious danger to progressive than to retrogressive thought. For the retrograde creed can go on subsisting by reason of its hold on the mass of unenlightened minds, as does all superstition in all backward races and places; and if in the meantime men turn away from the task of maintaining the contrary propaganda, holding it not worth while, the unenlightened faith may recover ground, as has happened many times in human history. Real human service then, to my thinking, is being done by all who realise that the general welfare of mankind depends upon the vigorous activity of the whole life of the mind, and is not to be secured by a mere gospel of bread-and-butter, housing and comfort, minimum wages and easier work, with only a vaguely conceived education which is not held to include instruction on the general problems set up by the creeds.

Some of us can vividly remember how, thirty and forty years ago, we were told by professed social reformers who proclaimed themselves of a new school that working men need not be troubled about the authorship of the Pentateuch or the truth of the Bible; that what concerned them was simply better wages and working conditions. We have none of us, I hope, ever capitulated to that view of things. To-day the leaders of the Labour Party unanimously assure the perturbed *British Weekly* that it is quite a mistake to regard them as any more affected by irreligious views than the party which included Lord Morley. And it is but fair to say that they show no tendency to depart from the average orthodoxy of the English Nonconformist churches. The more need that the mental life should be kept going and growing by those who feel its value, and who see that it is far from being fully catered for in either our schools or our universities. Commonplace reaction is easy of growth if there be none to do weeding work. And the retrospect of the religious evolution of a century is no weak monition to a continuance of the work which furthered it within these walls.

We do well, then, at such a time to say: "Come now, let us praise famous men and our fathers who begat us"—our spiritual fathers, that is, who trod a path and cleared a field for us, and but for whose work our lot

had been darker and poorer. The debt, indeed, goes far beyond a century. Before South Place opened its doors, brave and strenuous work had been done for the emancipation of the modern mind from the tyrannies of creeds and authorities. Men to whom, probably, even the genial Winchester and Vidler paid small tribute, had made possible their measure of freedom and enlightenment. Two hundred years before Winchester, the freethinking Marlowe had spread the thought that Heaven and Hell were not places but states of mind. But none the less was their merit in striving, in an age of violent reaction and persecution, against a darkened theology which was fruitful in cruelty. And to the more highly cultured and endowed teachers who in the succeeding generations carried on their work in this place by mediating unweariedly for all new truth, standing bravely by the daring spirits who took the spears of bigotry in their breasts outside of all such shelter as was given by these walls—to them “resolute,” in the words spoken by Goethe a hundred years ago, “to live in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful”—to them we pay to-day a grateful and affectionate tribute, as to men who loved humanity not under supernatural command but in virtue of the greatness of their own hearts.

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OF THE
Celebration of the 150th
Anniversary



of
SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

1793 :: February 14 :: 1943



SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
London, W.C.1

THE OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

are the study and dissemination of ethical principles,
and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment.

The Celebration of the
150th Anniversary of South Place
Ethical Society

Sunday, February 14, 1943

In commemoration of the establishment of a congregation of religious dissenters, under Elhanan Winchester, at Parliament Court Chapel, Artillery Lane, Bishopsgate, London, on February 14, 1793, from which South Place Ethical Society has directly descended.

The Celebration took place at Conway Hall. The Right Hon. Lord Snell, P.C., C.B.E., LL.D., took the chair at 11 a.m., a large company being present. He began by reading letters from a number of distinguished friends of the Society who were unable to be present, and from kindred Societies in the United States of America. These appear elsewhere in this pamphlet.

Lord Snell then delivered the following address:—

Ladies and Gentlemen.—For more than twelve generations the South Place Ethical Society has been the loyal servant of great ideals. It has fought the good fight and it has kept the faith. We cannot accurately measure its influence on those who knew its work and who loved what they knew, but throughout its career it has been a wholesome corrective and an ever-constant help to people in times of mental indecision. We are met this morning to celebrate its past and gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to it. Let us all praise famous men whose spirit hath begat us. There are some who have left a name behind, and those who have left no memorial save in the wider knowledge and tolerance of our time. They are part of that power in the Universe which works and plans for better days.

The Society has been served by a long line of distinguished men whose erudition was associated with the enthusiasm of their time, and who in times of gloom and stress always kept their teaching alive with hope. Such leaders of the Society were both liberators and prophets. They were courageous in outlook, but never negative; their enthusiasms were restrained, but rarely timid or evasive. We have, therefore, a goodly heritage to sustain. In the course of its work the Society attracted many distinguished visitors. J. S. Mill, T. H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer certainly knew and respected the work that it was doing. Here, Longfellow heard for the first time his "Psalm of Life" used as a congregational hymn.

Let not the Society be overproud of this record. It has been criticized. It has been accused of being too consciously high-brow and too self-assured. Nor have the audiences escaped a certain amount of criticism. It has been said that they came not to receive inspiration from the speaker but to find out how much he knew about his subject, and it is said that the audience would more readily tolerate a false moral pronouncement than a flaw in logic. As a hopelessly low-brow person myself I can neither confirm nor deny these accusations. We are here to applaud the Society's contributions to the needs of past generations and to our own. How much there has been that calls for praise and thanksgiving! In an age of unwholesome superstition the Society was an antiseptic. It destroyed and it healed. It practised almost alone the religion of the open mind and kept its feet firmly on the ground. Emotion separated from reason it distrusted. With quiet, calm deliberation it disentangled every knot. The Society has had a progressive outlook on all the great issues of the day, and it has never been afraid to let an unaccepted

view be stated from its platform. If a man had an unpopular cause to advocate the Society gave him the right to be heard. For many years it was the only practising Catholic Church. It judged both tradition and prophecy by the searching test of knowledge. Was a thing true? If so let it be accepted whoever might reject it. Was it false? Then let it be denounced whatever the consequences. The prestige of antiquity of a belief or a prejudice gave it no relief from criticism. The Society was thorough in its rejections and its acceptances. It was more nonconforming than the Nonconformists. It aimed to reform the Reformation. It took itself for better or for worse and said "here is where we stand and on the solid rock of fact and reason we will build our Church." It did not reject the ancient philosophers and teachers because they were not modern, but it required them to prove their case even if they were old. It has been said that when Oliver Wendell Holmes, afterwards the great American judge, was about to begin his studies at Harvard he called on Emerson to receive his blessing and pay his respects. Emerson in effect said to him: "You are entering on a great experience and I wish you well. You will be subjected to the influence of the ancient philosophers, but do not allow yourself to be over-awed by them. Say to Plato: 'Look here, you have been pleasing men for more than two thousand years, now see if you can please me.'" In giving this advice Emerson sought to influence the young student not automatically to accept the conclusions of a great teacher, but to subject them to the test of his own experience and to the facts of the modern world. St. Paul probably had that need in mind when he said: "Prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good."

The influence of a highly specialized group such as South Place Ethical Society cannot be estimated with precision. That influence is not always obvious or measurable, but it is without doubt real and wholesome. Sometimes it shows itself in re-shaped human lives, and sometimes its transforming and energizing power passes into the purposes and achievements of society. In how many cases has the Society liberated and enriched the individual, given him direction and purpose, and changed what was a mere unit of a population into a creative personality? How many have found in its teaching and fellowship that which satisfied the mind, consoled the heart and aroused in them a much-needed reforming zeal? The influence that the Society has had on the thought and practice of the nation is not so obvious, but it has been both considerable and commendable. Minorities such as it represents are the essential instruments of collective progress. Wise advancement and helpful readjustment rarely, if ever, come spontaneously from the multitude. The mass is generally conservative in instinct and habit; it holds fast to what it knows, and distrusts adventure in unexplored fields. The challenge to the outworn, the call to march forward usually come from lonely men with courage and prophetic insight who seeing the approaching dawn, strike their tents and journey towards the sunrise. The crowd will accept only what the pioneer has made familiar to it, and it has often stoned the prophets. Its attitude is illustrated by the railway traveller who prefers to sit with his back to the engine because, while he does not much care where he is going, he likes to see where he has been.

The South Place Ethical Society has not lacked leadership of an inspiring type. It has been guided by men who "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them." Such men gave to the land freedom of speech, free printing and freedom of assembly and worship. What they won is entrusted to us for safe-keeping, and we shall not betray our trust.

The list of subjects considered on this platform reveals that it has been both catholic and tolerant. No limitation or test has ever been imposed upon its speakers. The only thing demanded of them has been that they should

speaking the truth as they knew it. It has been in the highest sense a Society of Free Thinkers. My own memories of it cover more than 50 years, and I have known most of those who have served it during that time either as individual Ministers or as members of that appointed Trinity of Oracles who instruct and guide us from this platform upon which I too have been accorded the privilege of making an occasional appearance.

Finally I remember that on the Sunday when he took his first leave of the Society (May 17, 1885) Dr. Conway chose for his theme "A charge to be kept at South Place." My copy of that discourse, together with the rest of my household effects was destroyed by German *Kultur*, but I remember that it laid upon us the charge to keep aloft the standard raised by our fathers. That we have tried to do, and today we rededicate ourselves to its service. It is good to have known the Society, a privilege to have served it. With gratitude and pride we salute its past and we commend its future to the gallant youth of our time.

Mr. J. McCabe

I was invited to speak today on the theme of South Place and free-thought. That, I presume, would make many of you fear that I would pursue a favourite line of which you have heard very often but I am taking the word "free-thought" in the broad sense in which Lord Snell referred to it. We are commemorating today not merely the fact that this Society has lasted 150 years, but that during that time it has courageously and with magnificent effect adjusted itself to every truth that men have discovered in that time. Emerson once said or wrote that consistency is the virtue of a coward. This Society has developed from a small Universalist congregation of ex-Baptists under Elhanan Winchester which, under Vidler, later adopted Unitarianism. It was a small and obscure section of a small and obscure sect. By the end of the 19th Century it was taking a most useful part in the public life of this country. Someone once said that man is his own Prometheus. That was one of the greatest discoveries of the last century. Man discovered that whatever power, whatever goodness, whatever truth, whatever beauty exists comes from humanity itself. That applies particularly in ethics. The doctrine of eternal punishment 150 years ago was the basis of ethical teaching throughout this country. Fox had already discarded that dogma when he took up his ministry. But the Society began with it in a modified form. Even Fox believed that the Bible was inspired and must have a kind of worship and adoration which no one except certain very backward bodies give it today. Fox was a great man. Year by year he looked upon this changing England and said that we of South Place must teach what is true and sound. All other churches were struggling with the old bonds. But those two great men, Fox and Conway, who led this congregation never troubled for a single moment to invent new phrases. Once it was plain that man had taken the sacred fire from heaven and that humanism was the goal, South Place became humanist. In so doing, it followed the creed of the majority in this country. We understand from the figures compiled by the Church of England that on Sundays nine out of ten of the people of this City come under no kind of Christian influence whatever. They neither go to Church nor read the Bible. To many it will seem strange that the average conduct of this country continues as high as it does in such a state of things. There was a critic of the last century, W. H. Mallock, who said, "You will go on for some time because you are burning the oil that you stole from the sanctuary when you left it." But Fox and Conway knew better. They burned a new oil when the old was found faulty. One dogma sufficed, that man shall inspire his own power, that all power comes from him, and that there is almost an indefinite advance

in front of us for that power. It was said of Fox that he made Unitarianism respectable, but Conway made humanism respectable.

I came into the Society 47 years ago wondering, as I came out of the gloom and isolation of the cloister, whether I was alone in the Universe. Within two months I found that there was at least one Society which held those ideals which I had built up in my own mind during a year or two of trouble. Then almost to the surprise of most of us we found ourselves in accord with the view of the modern world. If we cast our thoughts back to the normal world before the war, we see that the majority of people in the country hold the position we hold today. They may not like the phraseology and rationality of the ethical creed but the majority of educated people stand in the position to which Conway brought this Society over 70 years ago. There were many who predicted ruin as, they said, the old doctrines held together the fabric of an old civilization. Somehow the world has improved. Don't remind me that there is a war on. It proves the ethical case. What is it that the world is saying today of the arch-criminal but a condemnation in our language. Cruel, greedy, savage, selfish—Conway's language, which has become the dogma of South Place. What he said and laid down as the fundamental principle of this Society we see no reason to change. Moral law is human law. There is no hell for the transgressor. There is no need of hell beyond this world. You shall pay in this world for all transgressions. Some of us have an unbreakable confidence in the future of mankind. When evil-minded men defied the moral law, there arose at once a volume of moral indignation justifying our principles. We face a grave and delicate future. There is going to be a time requiring very great courage and discrimination. South Place must hold on to those principles that it has represented for the last sixty or seventy years. There will be a cry for excessive reprisals. There will be a cry for action which will disturb indefinitely the future of this planet. We hold on to our principles. I remember standing on this platform, or rather at South Place Chapel at the beginning of the century. What confidence we had. The middle ages were over, we were entering upon the age of indefinite progress. No one then foresaw the horrors through which the world was to pass. I remember arguing with J. M. Robertson as to whether we should totally disarm or partially disarm. Our confidence has not been justified. But that progress will be sustained and we shall enter upon the path of indefinite improvement we are certain; it depends on character. Some years ago friends of mine in various countries said the ethical issue was out-dated and that the economic issue alone was what matters to mankind. Where are those friends today? Trodden into the blood-sodden mud that is Europe today. That is a vindication of the principles which Conway gave us at the chapel. And we will hope that in another fifty years it will be found not only faithful to these principles but to have regained that influence on the life of the community which it had and which it has exercised to the advantage of the world.

Dr. C. E. M. Joad

The Chairman and Mr. McCabe have dealt for the most part with the past of the Society. I wish to say a word about its future, and I am taking for my text (if I may use that expression) that declaration of belief in the duty of free inquiry and the rights of religious liberty made by W. J. Fox on his appointment as Minister of the old Parliament Court Chapel, Bishopsgate, in 1817. The Chairman had this declaration in mind when he spoke of the Religion of the Open Mind. That was the type of religion which has lasted among us for the past 150 years and which will, I hope, continue to exist—and flourish—in the near future. The duty of free

inquiry and the right of religious liberty seem to me to go together. They are based both upon philosophical reasons and upon political reasons. I shall glance at the philosophical reasons first.

How little we know of the universe in which we live: I ventured, in a recent discourse here, to point out that, in a very real sense, the more we know the more we become aware of our real ignorance. What we know is like a little lighted patch in an area of surrounding darkness; the more we increase the size of the illuminated patch, the more we increase the length of the circumference, increase, therefore, its area of contact with the unknown—the more, that is to say, we become aware of the enviroing darkness.

That this is so is becoming plain, even in Science which, 50 or 100 years ago was confidently and bravely exploring the dark places of the world. Science is a match which mankind has just set alight. For a time we thought we were in a room and that our light would be reflected from and display walls inscribed with wonderful secrets and pillars carved with divine messages. It is disconcerting, now that the preliminary splutter is over and the flame burns clear, to see our hands and just a glimpse of ourselves and the patch of ground upon which we stand, and around us, in place of all that comfort and beauty and friendliness and meaning we expected, darkness still.

This being the case, one would have thought that free inquiry and religious liberty would be more than ever cardinal virtues, but this to-day is far from being the fact. Mankind has always been, and still is, under the domination of two great fallacies. The first is that there is something morally good in *believing*—irrespective of what it is that one believes. Men like to be told what they ought to do and what they ought to think—witness the popularity of the Church and the Army—and as always make a virtue of what they like.

I cannot share that delusion. It seems to me that it is much more important that a man should make up his mind for himself as to what he ought to do, and what he ought to think. If current beliefs appear to you to be unworthy of belief, then he ought to accept the duty of free inquiry, with a view to substituting worthier beliefs.

The second fallacy is that it is right or virtuous to share the beliefs of others. Attempts are being made everywhere, in realms where knowledge is hazy or incomplete, to implant particular dogmas, and then to insist on making the world uncomfortable for all who do not accept them. We are living in an age of increasing dogmatisms. Their spread is part of the disease which threatens to overrun our world. Compare this situation with the optimism that existed at the beginning of the century. Then (in 1913), Professor J. B. Bury, in *A History of Freedom of Thought*, wrote:

"The struggle of reason against authority has ended in what appears now to be a decisive and permanent victory for liberty." and John Stuart Mill, in *Liberty*, (1859) wrote:

"It is too much to profess to be afraid lest barbarism after having been fairly got under, should revive and conquer civilization." We have travelled far since then. A huge gulf lies between their world and that of the present-day Germany, a land in which whatever is not compulsory is *verboten*. Only last Sunday it fell to my lot to visit that vast Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth in Eire. Within its walls are six hundred young celibate males for whom all vital questions are closed, for whom all necessary knowledge is provided, and to whom even a free inquirer such as I believe myself to be appears in the light of an *infidel*.

Or, consider the power of advertisement in the modern world as an instrument for the manufacture of mass opinion. I believe that if every hoarding in the country were covered with announcements to the effect that

C. E. M. Joad was the most modest man alive, supported by a myriad leaflets and a brass band, it would soon become a received opinion that I was consumed by an abnormal shrinking from publicity.

Growing up around us is a vast number of different creeds and religions which are springing into existence because, presumably, they satisfy some instinctive and repressed need of man's mind—or man's soul. I see a world in which Astrology, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, Buchmanism and British Israelitism (to name only a few) are appealing to many, not without considerable success. These aspirins for the sick headache of modern humanity all purport to furnish positive answers to questions on which the truth is not known. Such bodies are the greatest enemies of the cause for which this Society stands.

The duty of this Society is to get the people freely to inquire, and to keep the spirit of doubt and scepticism active. There has never been anything more disastrous to society than, what William James called, "The Will to Believe." For "The Will to Believe" I would substitute "The Wish to Find Out," and (in the absence of discovery) "The Duty of Doubt." I know no better way.

We must remember that a great war is always followed by reaction. We shall be invaded by new creeds, cults and dogmas, and the probable results of such invasions of the minds of men will be intolerance and the persecution of people like ourselves who exist to promote free inquiry and free thought. The duty this Society has responded to so admirably for the last 150 years presses upon us now even more fully. We can hardly discharge it more faithfully than by emulating the high examples the Society itself has set us.

I should like to end by a quotation from Gilbert Murray's *Stoic, Christian and Humanist*:

"Man is surrounded by unknown forces of infinite extent and almost infinite power. It is man's consciousness of these forces, or, shall we say, of the infinite extent of the unknown compared with the small sphere of knowledge in which we live, that constitutes the attitude towards life which we call a religious attitude. A man who never thinks at all about the unknown but is confident that outside his approved range of knowledge there is nothing, or at least nothing that matters, is clearly without Religion; I conclude therefore that he is equally without religion whether his approved range is the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or the dogmas of some infallible Church. To be cocksure is to be without religion. The essence of religion is the consciousness of a vast unknown. Call it Faith or call it Doubt: they are two sides of the same medal."

Professor J. C. Flugel (who kindly took Professor Keeton's place at very short notice):

An Anniversary like this is always heartening if for no other reason than that we feel ourselves bound closely to those of the past. We have heard a great deal of the very heartening past of this Society. Some of you present on this platform have made me blush for my seeming ignorance of it. You have known something of this Society for one-third of its existence. I have not known of it for so long as I should have liked. I have known it for about ten years and during that period, observing its activities, sometimes from the body of the hall, sometimes from the platform, a few things have always impressed me. For instance, however different the conditions under which one has met one can always rely on a goodly number of people being here. First I came in the winter, and then in summer, and there were still about the same number. There have been different speakers on different topics, but little difference in the audience. When war came with its sirens, again very little difference. It is astonishing, too, with what skill the audience

adapt themselves to the occasion and console themselves for their disappointments. Once when I was unexpectedly deputizing for a colleague only four people got up to leave.—You have already heard that South Place has not lacked courage so that they were clearly not afraid to leave. This occasion was rather a fresh opportunity to stimulate their wits, and discover whether I was wrong.

The Society has great traditions, and one can prophesy for it a vigorous future though, no doubt, it will have to adapt itself to changed conditions and circumstances. We may remind ourselves that this meeting on St. Valentine's Day may have some significance. Love is more important than hate. We have to consider the ramifications of love and hate, but particularly of love. There are a great many topics which will be raised. It would be interesting to have particulars of the subjects. On the whole there has been a decreasing emphasis on metaphysical matters and an increase of attention to economical and psychological topics. This will be carried further. Biology will occupy an important place in the future as well as politics. In so far as the Society transfers its activities to these spheres it will only be carrying on its work as the interests that found expression in the religious controversies of the past have, to a large extent, become attached to economics, sociology and politics. We have to advance. Progress, however, involves an increased length of communications, and there will be a great growth of sinister influences which will threaten our communications. These old fields of metaphysics with which we have been concerned in the past will still have to occupy us. We look forward to those who will address us 150 years hence. We do not know their subjects, but we feel confident that this Society which has survived two great wars, the Napoleonic and the first World War, and is in process of surviving a third, will continue to confront the difficult problems which will come before us. Looking both before and after we realize that we are standing linked in a long chain, one end stretching to the past, one held out to the future. We rejoice in the stimulating influence of both past and future. We greet the past and look hopefully towards the future.

Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe

On this anniversary we think of the age and continuity of the South Place Society. England is commonly thought of as a land of close tradition, more favourable than any other to the growth of voluntary associations. Yet, if we except some famous academic foundations, there are not many existing societies which have endured into the second century, and it is interesting that those which have done so are mostly linked with philanthropic and ethical purposes. South Place is of this small number, in no less activity than at any earlier stage. As today we look back to the beginning, we may note in particular two points. First, that the parent Society was formed within four years of the outbreak of the French Revolution. The initial impact of that crashing event was already over. It had drawn a line between the old Europe and the unknown. Wordsworth was recalling its first flush when he wrote: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive." In 1793 the Terror and war with England were impending. The repercussions on our side of the Channel were many. The hopes and activities brought out by the Revolution provoked measures of repression, but London in the last decade of the 18th century was a stimulating city. Men and women were thinking about the fundamentals of life and society with a new freedom and intensity. Secondly, there is the fact that America was beginning to make itself felt in England. Benjamin Franklin had appeared in London, and had been recognized as the first original American. It was not unfitting that the first minister of the congregation that was to become South Place should have come from America: and it was more significant still that the second of the famous leaders who shaped the character of the Society should be American, a

friend of those poets and teachers in the United States who were looked upon in the middle of the 19th century with especial admiration from our side. They were fresh and inspiring, and they sounded a fine equalitarian note, the best of all tonics for Victorian England. Emerson's early essays came over while W. J. Fox was still in charge, and when Moncure Conway arrived Emerson's lecture tour in England (1847) was a recent memory. South Place was one of the cradles of the English-speaking Entente upon which so great a measure of our hopes now depends.

There is no portion of the Society's heritage of higher value than the wide hospitality of its platform. The roll of visiting speakers is most remarkable—such eminent Victorians as Huxley and Tyndall and Max Müller, down to later contemporaries like Bernard Shaw, Gilbert Murray, and the gallant Henry Nevinson so lately lost to us.

The appointment of a quartet of lecturers after Dr. Conway's retirement was a distinctive arrangement. There has been nothing in London at all similar. It meant among other things that, in the interval between the Boer War and the first World War every conspicuous public question was reviewed at South Place by the regular speakers. They were complementary to one another. Herbert Burrows was a picturesque and rather mystical rationalist. Joseph McCabe we have with us still; he has fetched a wider compass than any in his spiritual pilgrimage. J. M. Robertson, a two-fisted fighter, seemed in his earlier stage to have a positive genius for identifying himself with unpopular causes. Yet he proved himself an effective parliamentarian and was the first of our company to attain the distinction of ministerial responsibility. His range of knowledge was immense; he was one of the two or three most widely-read men one has known. Our honoured J. A. Hobson, the third member of the quartet to go, holds his unique place. We shall not cease to be grateful for his creative thinking, the constant play of his kindly and satiric humour, and to recall that lean, slight figure, familiar over so long a period in London assemblies, the embodiment of a spirit that was alert, courageous, and wholly incorruptible. Nor do we forget Delisle Burns, who had the training and all the gifts for an ideal ethical teacher, lacking only the health which would have enabled him to fulfil his calling. His loss to the Society was not to be estimated.

South Place began in the French Revolution, the opening crisis of the modern age. It has carried on through a century and a half to the ultimate agony of our civilized world. "Our present business is the general woe," says one in King Lear; and that woe is of immeasurable depth and extent, going infinitely beyond all previous experience. We cannot doubt the truth of Dr. Joad's forecast that there are still grimmer days ahead. Our people, it would seem, are in danger of being misled by the miracle of England, by the marvellous resistance of our people in the Battle of Britain and the recent victories which, as we believe, proclaim our island to be as of old invulnerable. The events of the past two years have left us singularly detached from the continent of ruin and anguish, so that many among us cannot feel that the structure is destroyed. Yet the truth is there: the historic Europe of 2,000 years has gone and can never be restored. The other day we listened to Alexander Werth speaking over the air from a point in the desolation that was Stalingrad. That great modern industrial centre is wiped out. And so it must be through the continent as the tides sweep over the vast theatres of war. The conqueror destroys in his march forward. The resisting army destroys as it flings the invader back. The retreating enemy completes the hideous work. Victory for the United Nations cannot be separated from material ruin. The structure of that wondrous Europe lies in the dust. And yet there must and will be recovery, for mankind is indestructible. We were glad to hear from Dr. Joad so clear a reaffirmation of that central South

Place principle, the duty of free inquiry. I would add on behalf of that remnant of the faithful upon whom the challenge of our terrible time falls with especial force, the kindred and positive duty of proclaiming the values that can never be removed or shaken—the values of reason and conscience, of intelligence and humanity, of tolerance and mutual aid. We believe that there can never be salvation for our race save through the recovery of these essentials. There is no other path by which we can return. This, however we name it, is the one and only road.

Mr. C. J. Pollard

I think it is rather severe that you should be asked to listen to me after the particularly moving speech of Mr. Ratcliffe, but you did not know that that was going to be the conjunction. I am not responsible for it, so you have to put up with it. Dr. Joad said there was a tendency in our people to refer to the past. I can agree with him there because that is all I know anything of really. To go back quite a long time, and thinking of the exhibits in the Small Hall which Mr. Herbert Mansford has set out, I bear in mind one relic in my possession which I treasure. It is the certificate of my membership of the National Secular Society, signed by Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, for it is a memento of the movement with which South Place has been intimately connected. After that I was in the wilderness for a time and then I joined the South London Ethical Society where I met our Chairman, whose work for the Central London Ethical Society I have not forgotten. I went there many times and our Chairman was a tower of strength in keeping together a very difficult position. I enjoyed that connection. Then, notwithstanding that I had read that S.P.E.S. stood for "Superior Persons' Ethical Society," which put me off for a time, I began to take on airs myself and said to myself, where there is S.P.E.S., there is hope. So, in 1912, I joined this Society.

But my duty is to rise on behalf of the trustees, fellow-members and friends to thank our Chairman, Lord Snell, for presiding, and our speakers for their very valuable support in our celebration of the 150th anniversary of a religious and ethical movement that through various revolutionary phases has pursued a continuous and vigorous existence. I cannot do better than quote a passage from our Chairman's recent New Year's address. He said: "For one hundred and fifty years this Society has been the servant of great thoughts and ideals. That must continue. What we were, we are, and shall remain." If Lord Snell is correct, and I am certain he is, then gratitude on our part is due to our lecturers for their inspiration in carrying on the life and activities of the Society. While not forgetting to pay tribute to our lecturers of the past this morning—I remember Moncure Conway, John A. Hobson, John M. Robertson, Delisle Burns—I wish specially to thank our present lecturers who are so well represented on our platform today. They are doing yeoman service in maintaining the principles of free thought and speech and in upholding the integrity of rationalist and ethical values. Their leadership holds us together in face of the sore trials of war conditions. The influence of this band of well-known men extends not only to those who attend on Sunday mornings, but to those outside the London area who are kept in touch with the work of the Society by means of the excellent reports of the Sunday morning lectures published in *The Monthly Record*. I thank the Editor for maintaining such a high standard. Therefore, in recognition of our lecturers' good work I am sure this meeting joins with me in heartily thanking Lord Snell and his fellow-lecturers here.

Professor G. W. Keeton, who was prevented by illness from being present, subsequently sent the following:

A hundred and fifty years is a long span in the life of any institution, even in a country such as this where institutions are proverbially long-lived. It is therefore not in any sense surprising that in the course of its long career our Society should have had its ups and downs, and that its development, though it might seem at times imperceptible, has been continuous and in the aggregate considerable. Today it is with peculiar satisfaction that we see within our midst evidences of particular vitality, even during a total war which has involved a far greater dislocation of the national life, and a greater drain upon the efforts of those who are not directly serving in the Forces, as our young men and women are doing, than has ever been required before.

Perhaps when this Society celebrates its two-hundredth anniversary in the year 1993, some of the major issues of our time will have been solved. Perhaps we shall have social security; perhaps even we shall have abolished war. Certain it is that if we have not done these things we shall have seen drastic and far-reaching changes, not only within our country, but in the world at large. But of one thing I am quite certain; that is, that whether the problems which agitate us today are solved or not there will be in 1993 a number of problems awaiting solution of which we are as yet ignorant. That necessarily means that the need for Societies such as ours, and for a platform such as Conway Hall, will be even greater than it is today. Let us hope that at that time our strength to face that problem will be proportionately the greater, that our efforts may not pass unremarked by people at large (as they sometimes appear to do at present), and that our principles, tested by the criticism and the experience of another half-century, will be even more clearly apprehended and firmly professed than they are today.

It is interesting to reflect upon the conditions prevailing when the Society was founded in Bishopsgate in 1793, and to compare and contrast them with the conditions existing today. Then, as now, a world-wide struggle was in progress, although at that time the sinister genius of Napoleon had not yet revealed itself behind the mounting terror of the French Revolution. I have no doubt whatever that our first Ministers were regarded with some anxiety by those who watched over the destinies of this country at that critical period. Inevitably, they were deeply interested in the progress of events in France. Inevitably too, they must have felt sympathy with the efforts of the first reformers, for if there is one thread which runs through the work of our successive Ministers and Lecturers, it is their abiding interest in the problems of social justice, augmented in some cases by very practical efforts to achieve it. Our first Ministers lived at a time when full religious toleration had been by no means achieved, before the passing of the first Factory Act or the first Reform Bill, and when the government of the day was headed by a remarkable statesman, who in his early Parliamentary career had shared some of the idealism of his yet greater father, but who as the struggle with France progressed was compelled steadily to abandon one by one his liberal plans and to resort ultimately to machinery of repression in a tremendous and successful effort to ensure the survival of this country and empire. In those days, when society was much less complex than it is today, the emergence of a free pulpit within the confines of the City of London must have been the subject of numerous confidential reports by government agents, and it was no doubt watched with some care, but it would be an interesting study to trace the association between the Society in its early days and that undaunted body of liberal thinkers who refused to be silent even in the grimmest days of the great struggle which lasted from 1792 to 1815.

Nevertheless, in spite of the stern nature of the times, the Society survived as it is doing today, and the period following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars was one of the periods of its greatest usefulness. It was an

eventful and an exciting age. Claims for social and political reform, long denied, were steadily growing in volume, until in the middle of the nineteenth century the tide flowed with irresistible force. The period too was one when a strong demand for increased educational facilities manifested itself, and if one studies the ministry of Fox, one finds that he spared no effort to discharge his obligations in respect of it. Many of his addresses have an astonishingly modern ring, although I suspect that one or two of them on such topics as "War" and "Imperialism" might possibly result in a period of detention if delivered today. One finds that Fox was not content simply to deliver Sunday addresses. He developed discussion classes on the problems of the day, and held public disputations with leaders of public thought. At almost precisely the same moment other groups with similar ideals, though unconnected with any religious organization, were slowly establishing themselves as educational forces and corporations, to form the nucleus from which the great and intricate University of London has since grown. A short time ago, I read some of the addresses which Fox had given to his assemblies of working men, and was greatly impressed by their sincerity and by the range of his interests.

No doubt when the Society celebrated its centenary in 1893, those who were responsible for its destinies shared the general impression that progress though gradual is continuous, that the major social and international problems of the day were well on their way to solution, and that the nations might be expected to live harmoniously and reasonably together. Our present difficulties show how wide of the mark this estimate was. Today, whole civilizations are on trial, and what will eventually emerge is by no means clear. Is there any wonder, therefore, that people today are thinking with greater concentration than they have done before, that they will not be satisfied with evasive answers, and that they are continuously seeking some test by which social and political systems may be judged? I firmly believe that it is our business to seek, if only to a limited degree, to assist this spirit of enquiry, to develop the habit of political thought which in the long run is the best protection against the abuse of power. The application of the principles of reason to the solution of human problems can only be opposed by those who are themselves unsure of the ground on which they stand, and it is for that reason that I confidently expect our Society to grow in strength as the years pass.

The following letters were received from:—

Dr. George Catlin

I offer my congratulations to the South Place Ethical Society on its hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and wish it many happy centenaries. Instead of limiting itself to a merely secularist "rationalism" flavoured by the last century, it has kept abreast of the times. It has emphasized not only the ethical in life and society but what I would like (coining a new word) to call "reasonablism"—too rare these days—and so has kept true to the great humanist tradition, of liberty, tolerance and taste. Thanks to this, in the best sense, liberal spirit, it continues, in its forum, to lead the thought of its generation instead of being led by it. It has always followed the Platonic injunction to "set sail and go whithersoever the argument may lead." It performs a unique and invaluable function in stimulating grey-beards, abashing adolescents and giving philosophers, popular and unpopular, a hearing. Long may it flourish.

Mr. W. B. Curry (Dartington School, Totnes)

I greatly regret my inability to attend anniversary meeting. Please convey my fervent hope that the good work of the Society for Reason, Humanity and Tolerance will long continue. (Telegram.)

Mr. Laurence Housman

Though I am a member of a Christian Community, I welcome the 150th anniversary of your Society as a proof that the Ethical Movement is still going strong. It has, in the past, done much to lessen the hold which bigotry, intolerance and superstition have had on the religious world in general; and even on theologians its influence has been wholly for good.

Christians do not sufficiently realize how much they owe to the Humanist movement for the lessening of religious persecution in their various societies, and for its removal from legislation. The more we are Freethinkers the better shall we be qualified to discover what is worth believing. For what is true Religion but right relation to Reality?

Dr. Julian S. Huxley

I am sorry that I cannot possibly be present on the occasion you mention, but send a brief message:

"The South Place Ethical Society has in its 150 years of life done a great deal to foster that combination of rationalism and the religious spirit which is so necessary for the future of Society. I wish it equal success in the future."

Mrs. E. Holyoake Marsh (daughter of George Jacob Holyoake)

My father joined South Place in or about 1858 and our family have belonged ever since. I am sorry owing to the strenuous times and my age that I cannot join in. South Place has such a grand record and has enabled many unorthodox men and women to get an audience and in that way has helped the cause of religious freedom and progress. Best wishes for its continued success.

Dr. Gilbert Murray

I warmly congratulate the South Place Ethical Society on its hundred and fifty years of valuable and inspiring activity. The present state of the world, in which men of the most diverse religious beliefs are united in a common struggle against evil things, is a testimony to the truth of Moncure Conway's position. Men are divided by their various religious dogmas but united by their common recognition of Right and Wrong. I wish I could be with you today.

Professor T. H. Pear (Manchester University)

I am very sorry war conditions make it impossible for me to give myself the pleasure of attending your 150th anniversary on Sunday. Had I been there I should have liked very much to say how deeply I admire the aims of the Society and no less the way in which they are carried out in spite of all difficulties. I wish that during the happy years I spent in London I had known about your Sunday meetings. They would have been a source of great help to me. May I wish the Society at least another 150 years of useful work?

Professor L. Susan Stebbing

I much regret that I am unable to be present on this occasion. The foundation of this Society 150 years ago was an event whose importance has been shown in the development and influence of this Society. Through your work some ordinary men and women are helped to think freely about what most concerns them as persons and as citizens. For this we have reason to be grateful.

Dr. R. H. Thouless

I feel honoured to be allowed to congratulate the Ethical Society on the attainment of its 150th anniversary. More than ever at the present time,

there is an important function to be fulfilled by a Society devoted to righteousness and rationality. Unreasoning hatred is likely to increase as the war goes on. It is of great value to the world that there should continue to be centres of calm reasonableness, in which hatred of evil and cruelty are not allowed to overthrow the persistent attitude of love towards men which is the only attitude that is wholly sane. I hope that the Ethical Society may long remain such a centre.

The American Ethical Union (Mr. George E. O'Dell, Secretary)

The Officers and Executive Board of the American Ethical Union wish me to extend to the South Place Ethical Society their most cordial greetings on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Society.

The long record of the South Place Society for freedom of thought in matters of religion and ethics and its eventual identification with the Ethical Movement give it a unique place in the history of the Movement, a pioneering place, and one which we in America greatly respect and admire.

In these days of international conflict and the clouding of the life of mankind, it is a special solicitude on the part of Societies such as ours that they shall draw together in devotion to the common cause of human enlightenment. We wish to feel our nearness to you, as yours to us. Please accept our heartfelt sympathy with you in your great share in our common troubles, and our expression of hope that before long your Society will be able to face its work unencumbered by the exigencies of war.

Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture (Dr. Henry Neumann, Leader)

It is a pleasure to transmit to you in the name of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture the congratulations of our Society on the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of your fellowship. We can understand something of the pride you feel in your history. You have kept burning a kind of light which the world greatly needs. Though our numbers are small everywhere, it is encouraging to learn that multitudes everywhere now appreciate the fact that the one great justification for any religion whatever is its contribution to the ethical life of mankind.

May your light continue to shine!

Ethical Society of St. Louis, Missouri (Mr. H. V. Putzel)

As chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ethical Society of Saint Louis it is my great privilege and distinct pleasure to send to the South Place Ethical Society the cordial greetings of our members, and to extend to the members of your Society, on the occasion of its sesquicentennial, our hearty congratulations.

There has been a remarkable mutuality between the British and American Societies. The success of the Ethical Movement in the United States is in no small measure due to those Englishmen who have labored and happily are still laboring so ardently in the field of humanism and ethics. America owes much to Henry J. Golding, Horace J. Bridges, George E. O'Dell and W. Edwin Collier; and the St. Louis Society in particular will ever be in the debt of Percival Chubb and J. Hutton Hynd. Lord Snell, too, to whom we would send special greetings, has ever been a welcome guest in Saint Louis, and we hope that before long it may be possible for him to resume his visits to America.

As in the past the United States and Great Britain have carried on an exchange of Ethical Society Leaders, to the great benefit of each country, it is our sincere hope that our close fellowship will continue to be sustained by constant interchange of such services as may strengthen our common cause to the benefit of the world at large.

I think it was Bismarck who said that it was of the most momentous historic significance that Great Britain and America spoke English. May it be of even greater significance that in both countries they also speak the

language of Humanism and Ethics; and may the voices of our great Leaders be heard and heeded in the Peace to come.

With sincere congratulations and cordial greetings.

Mr. J. Hutton Hynd (Ethical Society of St. Louis, Leader)

To the greetings which Mr. H. V. Putzel will send you in the name of the Ethical Society of Saint Louis I wish to add my own personal greetings and congratulations:

Because I feel that I owe a special debt of gratitude to the members of the South Place Ethical Society who, as far back as 1793 and on into the Twentieth Century, responded to the appeal of their American and British ministers and leaders, thus doing so much to raise the religious life to a more rational and ethical level. Their response, so courageous in the face of so much bitter misunderstanding of motive and aim, made it ever so much easier for those who, in a later time, were to seek the greater freedom and joy of a more rational and ethical religion. And as one of the seekers who found a spiritual home in the Ethical Societies in the City of London I wish to record my sincere gratitude.

It was one of your distinguished ministers, Dr. Stanton Coit, who introduced me to the Ethical Societies in London; and it was my special privilege and great honor to assist him for four or five years in the Ethical Church in Bayswater, and to be his understudy. Never for a moment have I regretted the step which, by my confidence in him and his belief in me, led me from the Christian ministry to the Ethical Movement: and it is my sincere hope that the Ethical Societies will never compromise their position of leadership in the more rational and natural interpretations of ethics and religion. The earlier leaders of the South Place Ethical Society obeyed their vision and took the risks of obedience, and with their example before us, on this occasion of the sesquicentennial, we may obey the vision as it appears to us, and take the risks of obedience as they come to us, in our own day—and thus be faithful to the great and glorious tradition that is ours.

Philadelphia Ethical Society (Mr. W. Edwin Collier)

On this 150th anniversary of the foundation of your Society, it might interest you to know that your history is at the moment more familiar to the average member of our Philadelphia Society than it has ever been. It has become meaningful and even helpful to us in two connections.

In the American branch of our common Movement, it happens that the Societies on the Eastern seaboard contain many members of Jewish background. Consequently those administering the Selective Service Act have sometimes brought pressure on our members to state their religion as "Jewish." In order to dispel the confusion thus revealed as existing in the public mind, we have issued a brief historical pamphlet in which, inter alia, the unbroken descent of your Society from a Universalist Baptist establishment is outlined and stressed.

Secondly, as an essay in self-education, mutual understanding and religious "good-neighbourliness," the Religion and Ethics (Study) Group of our Society this season invited representatives of twenty-one denominations to give us first-hand accounts of their beliefs. Included were the Unitarians and Universalists. Our historical linkage with these denominations was brought out and in each case it was your Society particularly which was involved. On the one hand, your former Minister, Stanton Coit, has made it his lifework to actualize Emerson's vision of "a church founded on moral science"; on the other hand, you and the Universalists share a common descent from Elhanan Winchester.

So your name and origin is a household word in our far-off Society today.

The Trustees of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, by unanimous resolution, desire to associate themselves with me in greeting you on this happy occasion. The English Ethical Movement, like the nation of which it is a part, has gallantly endured the years of "sweat and tears"; may it prove now to be on the eve of flowering into true prosperity and ever-increasing effectiveness.

The Society for Ethical Culture in the City of New York (David S. Muzzey, Chairman of the Board of Leaders)

The Leaders and Trustees of the New York Society for Ethical Culture thank you for your letter of November 5, informing them of the 150th Anniversary Services to be held on Sunday, February 14, and congratulate you that you have Lord Snell to preside at the Meeting.

Unfortunately, none of our members will be in the neighbourhood to accept your kind invitation to participate in the meeting, but we are wishing you every good fortune and a continuance of the work of your Society.

The Luncheon Meeting

About 300 people were present at the morning meeting. Many of them, dispersed by the war, had made a special effort to attend, and when the speeches from the platform were finished, there were reunions in the vestibule and many greetings to be exchanged. At length, about a hundred members and guests adjourned to the "Jupiter's Pillars Restaurant," 32 Great Queen Street, Kingsway, where lunch had been arranged.

Lord Snell again presided, supported by the speakers of the morning and by the guests who had been on the platform with him. After lunch, Lord Snell, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Mr. Yusuf Ali of the Ethical Union, Mr. R. O. Prowse of the Ethical Church, Miss L. Gerard of the Hampstead Ethical Society, Mr. H. Tompkins of the English Positivist Committee, and Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner of the Rationalist Press Association, also Mr. Howell Smith, Mr. Rennie Smith, Mrs. G. Long and Mr. John Katz. He then called on Mrs. Florence Hawkins of the General Committee to address the company.

Mrs. Hawkins

It is my great honour to welcome you today and I thank especially the guests and lecturers for this opportunity of meeting them.

I would like to make a very brief reference to the similarity of events 150 years ago when our Society was founded, and those of today. Then there was a would-be world conqueror, Napoleon, and today Hitler follows the same path. Our Society runs as a thin red line from one great period to the other.

I would like to speak of the members who today carry on the tradition. Of the Trustees, responsible for the Trust Deed, we have with us Mr. Andrew Watson, who was Treasurer of the Concert Committee for over 10 years; Mr. C. J. Pollard, a former Secretary of the Society and a past Editor of *The Monthly Record*; Mr. Percy Dixon with his charming family; Mr. C. E. Lister, who is still our Treasurer; Mr. E. J. Fairhall, who frequently acts as Chairman of the General Committee, and myself.

Of the General Committee, a great number of us are middle-aged women. We feel the war is making great demands on us, but we are carrying on, grateful that we have not had to put up with the offending presence of the German Army and know the agony of our sisters in the occupied countries who see their families starve.

Of our Officers, may I mention Mr. S. G. Green, who over a period of ten years has done a great deal to develop the business of letting Conway Hall. Mr. F. G. Gould edits *The Monthly Record* and also cultivates a beautiful garden, flowers from which often decorate our Hall. Then there is Mrs. Lindsay, our faithful Registrar. I must mention Mr. Herbert Mansford,

our architect, who was making preliminary drawings for Conway Hall forty years ago. He is today in charge of the interesting collection of old records of the Society shown in the Small Hall. The work of his brother, Mr. Wallis Mansford, for our Society extending for a period of over fifty years, is gratefully recognized. I have already mentioned Mr. Lister as Treasurer and Trustee; I take this opportunity of referring to the heroic manner in which he and Mrs. Lister remained in residence at Conway Hall during the period of the air-raids on London, and especially on the night in May, 1941, when Red Lion Square was a blaze of fire. I would like to name our vocalist, Mr. G. C. Dowman, who sings regularly at our Sunday meetings, and also Miss Ella Ivimey, member of a well-known musical family, our accompanist and pianist who was at one time accompanist to Madame Melba. I would refer also to the late Mr. A. J. Clements, who put the name of South Place on the map of the world of music. The annual chamber music competitions arranged in his memory still keep us in touch with the musical life of the country. Mrs. Clements is happily present today.

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner

It is my lot to speak for the Guests on this remarkable occasion. I find myself to be a sort of Trinity, for in the first place I represent the Rationalist Press Association whose activities are somewhat allied to those of South Place Ethical Society. We endeavour to provide material for private study which you study sociably together. I am also the sole available member of the Executive of the World Union of Free Thinkers. The Belgian President and Secretary were alive eighteen months ago, but I have not heard from them since. A year before the war we held an International Congress in Conway Hall and a very successful gathering it was. My third interest is personal. Birthdays like this one come so rarely in the history of societies, particularly those which have intellectual and ethical reasons for their being in days like these when reason and ethics are rather overlooked. My personal and hereditary interest lies first of all in Moncure Daniel Conway who, when my grandfather was fighting Parliament, gave a series of addresses in his support which he very much appreciated. One of my very early memories as a small boy was of being taken to listen to Dr. Conway. Perhaps this was to counterbalance a visit with my Baptist relatives to Church where I was given a book to keep me quiet during the sermon. I visited Conway in Paris, and saw one of the earliest colour photographs which was a portrait of him. I also remember the addresses given by my mother (Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner) to children gathered at South Place. It is in the light of these recollections that I should like to add my words to those which have gone before, not only to express the thanks and appreciation of my fellow Guests, but to give you our birthday wishes for many 150th birthdays. We look forward, for the spirit of youth is here even if Mrs. Hawkins does complain of middle age. We must look forward to the time that is coming, for the determination to enquire what is good that marks all the deliberations of this Society will be required greatly in the coming years, and I hope that the future will evoke most valuable inspiration for you and what you stand for.

Let me end by quoting from a poem written by James Thomson (B.V.) to commemorate the inauguration of the Leicester Secular Hall in 1881:

"We now dare,
Taught by milleniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and late and bloody strife
With which these dreams have poisoned our poor life,
To build *our* Temples on another plan,
Devoting them to God's creator, Man."

Lord Snell

Our debt to the past has this morning been acknowledged. Our debt to the future has yet to be paid, and before the meeting dissolves I want to set our minds to the thought that we cannot live on memories. We cannot progress with veterans alone. We have got somehow to direct many young people to our ranks. I do not know what your outlook on life is, but in spite of pessimistic remarks some may have to make, I have faith in the future. At the end of my life I remain as hopeful in outlook as when I was a boy, but I hope for a number of people to pursue the path we have blazed. We have the satisfaction of knowing that young people will not have to go through the agony of outliving an ancient faith. All their mental energy will be free for reconstruction. Let us give them our blessing and let us salute the coming days. I now call upon our final speaker to sum up.

Mrs. G. Long (Miss Marjorie Bowen)

It is obviously impossible to make even the briefest summary of all the beautiful speeches we have listened to. I owe a personal debt to South Place Ethical Society. I used to go to its meetings when I was a small child. I am the descendant of a grim Scottish Nonconformist. One of Providence's worst decrees is that no woman seems able to contribute to philosophy. I know the best when I see it. I feel now as then that there can be nothing better than reason and ethics. Why this should be so I have never been able to explain satisfactorily. But we must have reason and ethics, and hold fast to them. In them only lies our salvation. It was not altogether that strip of water of the English Channel, it was also our non-conformist refusal to know when we were beaten that saved us after Dunkirk. One appeal I would make to the distinguished men we have heard today, and that is to influence women and children. Thus we cut a Gordian knot. Nothing is easier than to persuade a child before it is five years old. That is of primary importance. It is distressing to hear there may be once more an outflow of superstition and mysticism. That can lead nowhere. We must have reason and that is one of the main objects in the education of the young. We must try to leave the minds of children free so that they can apply rationalism and ethics to whatever brand of religion they may choose.

I thank you for asking me here today. I am extremely grateful.

The Afternoon Meeting

The Chairman on bringing the proceedings at this stage to a close, invited the company to return to Conway Hall for tea. Many did so and they were joined there by numerous members and friends who could not be present at the luncheon. A group of ladies had been at much pains to provide refreshments especially remarkable for variety and delicacy in time of war. Some self-sacrifice had obviously been involved. Mrs. Florence Hawkins as hostess welcomed newcomers. Later in the afternoon Miss Veronica Mansfield (mezzo-contralto) accompanied by Miss Ella Ivimey, delighted the audience with a recital of songs by Bach, Michael Head and Balfour Gardiner. Miss Mansfield was born at Perth, Western Australia. She was chosen by Dame Nellie Melba for a scholarship at the Royal College of Music, London. She is well-known in oratorio and in B.B.C. programmes. Thus was the Society's well-known interest in good music reflected on this unique occasion.

In conclusion, Mr. John Katz made a short and heartily applauded speech in which he voiced the thanks of all to Mr. S. G. Green (Secretary), and his helpers for what they had done to make the anniversary celebrations so successful.

THE EXHIBITION IN THE SMALL HALL

In the Small Hall was a collection of the Society's Records and Relics covering the past century and a half. Relating to the original chapel in Parliament Court, Bishopsgate, there was an external view, portraits of Elhanan Winchester and William Vidler, the pewter communion plate, and Minute and Account books. This chapel became a synagogue and was standing at the end of the nineteenth century. The salaries and expenses seem to us now quite trivial except for candles, which were probably the only source of illumination. The earliest exhibit in connection with the second chapel (South Place, Finsbury) was the draft inscription for the foundation stone written by W. J. Fox. There was a handsomely bound list of subscribers to the building, and volumes of *The Monthly Repository*, a magazine started by Fox in 1829 and edited by him for several years.

Various works of Dr. Conway were shown, together with some of the Society's own publications, namely, *Religious Systems of the World* and *National Life and Thought*. These were Sunday Afternoon Free Lectures extending over several years, mostly given by recognized authorities. A "Monthly List" of July, 1891, gave some idea of the Society's varied activities even at a time when its membership and income had declined. The Saturday afternoon Rambles were started in 1887 and from these developed co-operative holidays at Easter and Whitsun. The Monthly Soirées sometimes took the form of *Tableaux Vivants* and Spelling Bees then fashionable, or dramatic performances in which Mrs. Theodore Wright, Miss Athene Seyler and the Fentons frequently appeared. One season the Soirées had particular evenings to which members were invited to bring specimens of special interest relating to Geology, Botany, Photography, Printing, etc., short papers being read by members and others relating to the subject for the evening. Mrs. Cockburn lent a collection of Soirée programmes extending over about 30 years. A printed catalogue of books referred to the Lending Library started in 1886 when public lending libraries were very scarce in London. In 1889 a Club for Working Girls was started in South Street, in one room, and members volunteered to give lessons in music, painting, etc. Three years later it was removed to Rowland House, Eldon Street, its closeness to the Chapel enabled the four rented rooms to be used for Discussion Meetings and the Sunday School. The Club was later removed to Homerton (Chesterton House), and then to Mare Street, Hackney, where it functioned until the outbreak of the present war. Group photos of garden parties and dramatic performances were exhibited. In connection with the Sunday School there was an autograph letter from Maurice Maeterlinck to Wallis Mansford, who conducted the Annual Children's Service in 1891. The poet also sent to each child a signed illustration of his home in Wandrille Abbey.

1860 In the Society's News-cutting Books Mr. Ratcliffe discovered his own lengthy report for the *Daily News*, dated June 28, 1897, of Dr. Conway's Farewell Discourse. As he put his autograph to the cutting he remarked that he had not seen Dr. Conway previously. There was an almost complete series of portraits of the Society's ministers and regular lecturers, and an album included photographs of various members who had held office or otherwise helped in the work of the Society. A religious cartoon published about 50 years ago was exhibited in which Dr. Conway was depicted declaiming from a roofless South Place Chapel. It bore the inscription: "Moncure Conway's Free and Airy Tabernacle."

THE SOCIETY'S MINISTERS AND LECTURERS

	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Rev. Elhanan Winchester	Feb. 14, 1793	—May, 1794
Rev. William Vidler		1794—Aug. 23, 1816
Rev. William Johnson Fox, M.P.	April 2, 1817	—Jan. 29, 1853 (last discourse Feb. 8, 1852)
ASSISTANTS TO MR. FOX		
Rev. Philip Harwood	Feb. 27, 1840	—Sept. 23, 1841
Rev. N. Travers	Feb. 1849	—Dec. 1850
Rev. Henry Ierson	Jan. 1851	—Jan. 1853
Rev. Henry Ierson	Jan. 30, 1853	—April 26, 1857
Rev. H. N. Barnett	Jan. 31, 1858	—June 21, 1863
Dr. Moncure D. Conway	Jan. 31, 1864	—July 27, 1884
Dr. Stanton Coit	Sept. 2, 1888	—Dec. 31, 1891
Dr. Moncure D. Conway	Oct. 2, 1892	—June 27, 1897

A successor was not appointed. The platform was supplied by Lecturers invited by the Committee, most frequent among whom were the first four named below. In May, 1907, the Rules were altered to provide for the appointment by the Annual General Meeting of a Lecturer or Lecturers in place of a Minister. Under this Rule the following appointments have been made:

	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Mr. Herbert Burrows	May 1907	—Dec. 1922
Mr. John A. Hobson	" "	—April 1, 1940
Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson	" "	—Jan. 5, 1933
Mr. Joseph McCabe	" "	— —
Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe	" 1915	— —
Dr. C. Delisle Burns	" 1918	—Jan. 22, 1942
Dr. C. E. M. Joad	" 1941	— —
Professor G. W. Keeton	" "	— —

THE SOCIETY'S MEETING PLACES

Parliament Court Chapel, Bishopsgate. From February 14, 1793.
 South Place Chapel, Finsbury. From February 1, 1824 to March 31, 1927.
 London Institution, Finsbury Circus, used until
 Conway Hall was occupied on September 1, 1929.

THE SOCIETY'S NAMES

The congregation which assembled in support of Elhanan Winchester, the American Baptist preacher, at Parliament Court Chapel in 1793, called themselves Philadelphians. Winchester had cut across orthodoxy by *de* announcing and assailing the doctrine of Eternal Hell, thus helping to spread the creed, so-called, of Universalism which then meant simply "Universal Salvation in Christ." He had converted Vidler, his successor, to Universalism, and Vidler, in turn, converted himself in 1802 to Unitarianism. By this change his congregation was much reduced. There was, however, a Baptist connection which lasted long after the Society had become actively associated with the Unitarian body. W. J. Fox had struggled from a severe Calvinism to Unitarianism, which stage of development he had reached several years before becoming the Minister at Parliament Court Chapel in 1817. His aim before taking up that post had been to form a congregation on a comprehensive principle *with Virtue and not Faith* for the bond of union. The subscriptions invited for building South Place Chapel were for a new Unitarian Chapel. Mr. Fox took an active part in founding the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1825, and he was its first Foreign Secretary. His heterodox opinions were not, however, viewed favourably, and in 1837 the Society was excluded from the Unitarian Association, becoming thenceforth its own denomination as it remains to this day. The Trust Deed drawn up in 1825 introduces the term "Society or Congregation of Protestant Dissenters." This term is used in a copy of the Rules in use in 1857. Up till 1852 the term "Fox's Chapel" was probably in popular use. The Annual Report for 1871 only uses the words "South Place Chapel." In 1873 the title adopted was "South Place Chapel and Institute," thus referring to the Society's other activities. For the Annual Report of 1879 the heading is "South Place Religious Society." This was changed to "South Place Ethical Society" in 1888. No alteration in the principles of the Society was involved. The book by Dr. Conway, published in 1894, is entitled "Centenary History of the South Place Society." The older members will no doubt continue to speak of "South Place," but in time this term will give way completely to "Conway Hall." So many other organizations now hire the Society's premises that some danger to the identity of the Society is threatened. It is for the membership to see that in years to come predominant use of Conway Hall is made by South Place Ethical Society.

This Souvenir of the 150th Anniversary Celebration has been prepared for the General Committee by the Editor of *The Monthly Record*. The Editor thanks Mr. T. H. Elstob and Miss Doris Partington for writing draft reports of some of the speeches, Mr. Herbert Mansford for the description of the Exhibits, and all the speakers for correcting drafts or proofs. He also thanks the Secretary for suggestions, information and advice.

THE UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

THEY KEPT THE FAITH. (An appeal for help). By Arthur Peacock. Universalist Press, 57 Cavendish Road, London, S.W.12. 4d.

By a remarkable coincidence the year 1943 in which has been celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the congregation of Universalists which developed into South Place Ethical Society, is the 300th Anniversary of the Universalist Church, for within the building in Cavendish Road, Clapham Common, known as the South London Universalist Church, is preserved the shrine of Gerrard Winstanley, the leader of the Commonwealth days who held fast to Universalist teachings. It bears the date 1643. In days long past the distinctive doctrine of Universal Salvation was preached from within the Anglican Church but its advocates were persecuted so that they established congregations of their own. Their influence spread to the Methodists, and this incurred the displeasure of John Wesley—that stern upholder of the doctrine of Hell Fire—who described the Universalists of his time as "wretches who called themselves Methodists." Among these "wretches" was John Murray who wearied with the suffering caused by the hostility to his work, sought refuge in the United States where he founded the first American Universalist Church in 1774. It may be assumed that Elhanan Winchester came under its influence, for, seceding from the Baptists among whom he was a leading preacher, he turned Universalist, and coming to England in 1787 was appointed in 1793 Minister of Parliament Court Chapel by a congregation of his followers. The American Church flourished, but that in England has declined: in fact, it would appear that the sole surviving congregation is that which meets at Clapham under the leadership of the Rev. W. Arthur Peacock.

The pamphlet under notice contains a reference to the loss suffered by Universalism when the original trust deed of South Place Chapel was abandoned, when "the broader view of Christianity was forsaken that the humanist position might be embraced." There is no bitterness, and we on our part regard with affectionate sympathy those from whose widening beliefs our own have emerged. We must, however, remark that the break away from Universalism took place in Mr. Vidler's time long before 1825 when our original Trust Deed was drawn up, and that the subsequent modifications of the Deed to conform with the Society's objects was made in the present century.

In Mr. Peacock's pamphlet we read:—

"The Universalist Church rises above all credal assertions. The spirit of its faith is expressed in its ideals of belief:—

"We believe in One Great all Creative and all Pervading Potentiality; in the Sacredness of all Life; in the vision that is deepened and widened by Knowledge; in the excellence of Wisdom; In the Brotherhood and Humanity of Jesus; In the Faith that is Wedded to Reason; in the Oneness of all Religious Ideals; In a Life, a Justice, and a Truth that are Eternal; and in the Dutiful Reverence to all that is Noblest and Best in Mankind."

We of South Place may have no wish to criticize these ideals. We are informed that they were accepted in their present form by the Church in this country some fifty years ago. We recognize in them much that we still cherish. There may even be some among us who having read the pamphlet may care to respond to the appeal for financial help that the work of the Church may be continued.

