IT IS MY duty to announce that Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to grant her patronage to the Society and to continue the award annually of the Royal Medals. I should like to recall that the Society has enjoyed the royal patronage ever since its foundation in 1830, and each year we have the privilege of recommending candidates for the two Royal Medals—the Founder’s Medal, which bears the effigy of King William IV, and the Patron’s Medal, with the effigy of the reigning sovereign.

During the past year the Society has continued to prosper and it may be noted in particular that there appear to have been larger attendances at the evening meetings than in any other period since the war. The outstanding meeting of the year, on 4 February 1952, was Mr. Shipton’s account of the 1951 reconnaissance of the southern approaches to Mount Everest; and the demand for seats was so great that the lecture had to be repeated to a packed audience on the evening following.

As in previous years, our aim for the evening meetings has been to cover as wide a field of interest as possible; not only to deal with exploration in different parts of the world but also to present other aspects of geographical work. The polar regions have naturally been prominent, in the Antarctic with M. Liotard’s account of the French explorations in Adélie Land, and in the Arctic with Commander Simpson’s and Mr. P. D. Baird’s descriptions of their work in north-east Greenland and in the Canadian Arctic respectively. But other lectures, such as Mr. Shipton’s, Dr. Donald Thomson’s paper on Arnhem Land, M. Herzog and M. de Noyelle’s dramatic story of the conquest of Annapurna, and Dr. Herdman’s account of his oceanographical explorations in Discovery II, have preserved the balance, having in mind of course the greater possibilities today in the polar field for exploration on a large scale.

In contrast we have had a stimulating and original paper by Lord Verulam on the world demand for electric power and on the possibilities of transfer of energy across national frontiers; and finally a paper of much topical interest on Inner Asia by the distinguished American orientalist, Dr. Owen Lattimore.

The afternoon meetings, which at present attract smaller audiences but in which University students are prominent, were all of them followed by
vigorous debate; and they included an innovation in the form of a joint meeting addressed by the leaders of three University expeditions to Spitsbergen. Film meetings, which included this year a visit from Mlle. Ella Maillart to show her remarkable films of Nepal, were as popular as ever; and as in previous years, our special programmes of geographical films for teachers, with opportunities for discussion and criticism, were much appreciated.

The Christmas meetings and the Christmas Exhibition have in recent years become prominent features of the Society's programme. The meetings in fact have become so widely known that applications for tickets from non-Fellows, which must of course be refused, are as numerous as they are embarrassing. The first talk, "Jumbos and Jungles" by Colonel Williams, better known as "Elephant Bill", produced a variety of diverting and unexpected questions. In contrast, Ponting's original film on Scott's Last Expedition proved as fascinating to a youthful audience as it had already been to the Fellows, who had seen it at the Society last Summer as part of the celebration of the Festival of Britain. The Christmas Exhibition did not, as has been usual, link up directly with either of the children's meetings. It seemed more appropriate that the subject last December should be Mount Everest and its success was such that it remained on view for a period of nearly five months. The Exhibition covered the history of all ten expeditions made from this country since the original reconnaissance in 1921, and it illustrated for the first time the complete story of British endeavour in the specialized and physiological field of mountain exploration.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking those members of the Staff of the Society concerned for their support in these activities, and for the admirable and efficient way in which they have contributed to the success of our lectures and meetings—and not least in the case of the exhibition.

Among publications it is still not possible to issue the Geographical Journal more than four times each year, and the number of pages, although the total cost is about the same, is now less than half what it was in pre-war days. This curtailment has resulted partly from the high cost of paper, partly from difficulties in printing. These difficulties have also affected our other publications, but in spite of them progress has been made in certain directions. The second of the new series of Research Memoirs, Dr. Jennings' monograph on the origin of the Broads, is on the verge of publication. The third of the memoirs, by Mr. W. V. Lewis of Trinity College, Cambridge, is in preparation, with the assistance of a grant from the Royal Society, and will deal with his glaciological studies in Norway. The Librarian and Map Curator, Mr. Crone, has published under the Society's auspices, a booklet outlining the progress of modern geography since A.D. 1800, based on articles originally contributed to the Geographical Magazine, each one focussed on a central figure in his period. An important event, after the long delay imposed by the war years, was the publication of the 'Fifth General Index to the Geographical Journal,' covering the period from 1933 to 1942. The publication of the bibliographies of new geographical literature and maps was also resumed, on a twice-yearly basis and in an expanded form from that of pre-war days. The value to libraries and many other organizations of this up-to-date and annotated reference list is, of course, very considerable and no comparable publi-
cation in printed form, and including lists of maps, exists. Finally, a start has also been made on a new edition of ‘Hints to Travellers’ which will be in three volumes instead of, as now, in two.

Of the two international congresses in which the Society is more particularly interested one met last year, the other will meet this autumn. The International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics held its Congress in Brussels in August 1951. Among the activities which may be chosen for mention were those of Oceanography presided over by Dr. H. U. Sverdrup, and of Hydrology, where I was myself responsible for the Snow and Ice Commission in succession to Professor H. W. Ahlmann and will in turn be succeeded by Mr. Gerald Seligman as Chairman.

This August, the International Geographical Union will hold its Congress in Washington, D.C., and our Honorary Secretary, Mr. Brooks, and myself are attending to represent the Society both there and at the Centenary Celebrations of our sister Society, the American Geographical Society of New York. The Society particularly welcomes the Centenary of the American Society, and is sending a special address to mark our appreciation and friendship. One of the features of the Washington Congress will be exhibits of the cartographical work of many countries. The British exhibit, which has been coordinated by the Society’s staff, will be the most comprehensive of its kind yet organized, and in addition to contributions from the British Government survey departments will include specimens of the Society’s work and a selection of exhibits, mainly atlases, from commercial publishing houses.

Among other Congresses not primarily geographical I should mention that Mr. George attended the Commonwealth Survey Officers’ Conference in London last July, and that Mr. Kirwan took part in the International Congress of Orientalists as the Society’s representative at Istanbul last September. Congresses this summer also include the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences at Vienna in September, when Mr. J. V. Mills and Mr. L. C. G. Clarke will represent the Society; the Fourth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences at Uppsala in August, which will be attended by Mr. Aurosseau; and the International Geological Congress at Algiers in September, when Mr. A. F. Martin will represent the Society.

It is my sad duty to record the losses which the Society and the world of geographers in general have suffered since last year’s Annual General Meeting. Among these I particularly mention Brigadier E. M. Jack, who died in August 1951, and who had been a Fellow since 1908. He was awarded the Gill Memorial in 1916 for his work on the Uganda–Congo and Anglo–German–Belgian Boundary Commissions, and the Founder’s Gold Medal in 1919. The latter award was made in recognition of Brigadier Jack having been responsible throughout the war of 1914–1918 for all the survey and geographical operations required by the British Army in France and Belgium; new methods were evolved including sound ranging. At the end of the war he was in charge of the greatest survey force ever employed, over 4000 officers and men, and their labours resulted in the largest survey operation in history, and by far the most important ever undertaken up till then from a national point of view. After the First World War he succeeded Sir Charles Arden-Close as Director-General of the Ordnance Survey. For many years a highly
valued member of Council, he served from 1921–1931 as Honorary Secretary, and from 1931–1935 as Vice-President of our Society. More recently a similar loss was the death of Brigadier P. K. Boulnois in February this year. Brigadier Boulnois had been an important member of Council for many years, and like Brigadier Jack had also held the post of Head of the Geographical Section of the General Staff, later known as the Directorate of Military Survey. Abroad, we have lost a distinguished Honorary Member in Professor Bailey Willis, the American geologist, formerly of Stanford University, California. Academic geography, too, has suffered a regrettable loss through the death from a fall on Mount Nimba in West Africa of J. Richard-Molard, Professor of Colonial Geography at the École Nationale de la France d'Outre Mer.

During the year the Council have been faced with the problem of how to finance the Society's activities in a period of rapidly rising costs. During the coming year a deficit is expected of between £3000 and £4000. The problem of how to increase our income has therefore been under review throughout the year, with the probability that it would be necessary either to introduce a system of covenanting or to increase the annual subscription, or to do both. It is now evident that an increased subscription is inevitable. The last increase took place in 1908, when the subscription was raised from £2 to £3. That it has remained unaltered for such a long period is due to the increase each year in the membership of the Society. The rise has been a steady one and it is interesting to notice that it has taken place at practically the same rate since the Second World War as it did following the First World War in 1918. It is possible therefore to forecast with fair probability the rate of increase in the fellowship. The outcome of a system of covenanting is less certain, but negotiations with the appropriate authorities are being actively pursued.

The Council propose therefore to summon a Special General Meeting in the autumn to secure the consent of the Fellows to proposals for an increase in the annual subscription from £3 to £4, and for this increase to be applicable to all Fellows except those who were Fellows before 1908. The Council have reached the decision to increase the subscription with much regret, but feel sure that Fellows will appreciate the necessity for the step and will continue to support the Council in its endeavours. In order to meet the wishes of many Fellows arrangements will be made for the subscription to be payable by means of half-yearly or quarterly instalments, provided this is done by Bankers Order.

At the same time it has been decided to bring forward a second resolution at the Special General Meeting to reduce the entrance subscription from £5 to £4. This will also be payable by a system of instalments.

A third resolution will also be introduced inviting Fellows who are eligible to do so to covenant over a period of seven years. This, if approved, will provide an appreciable increase in the income of the Society without any additional commitment being incurred by the Fellows who decide to covenant.

With these changes we should I think be able to balance our budget. If so, we shall be able to restore our activities—as is our duty as a learned society—to something approaching their pre-war strength. The number of meetings, evening, afternoon and films, will be increased, though the total will still be
below that of pre-war days. Our main source of spreading geographical knowledge is by the *Journal* and it is hoped to see it enlarged as soon as possible. The Council have had this matter under review with the intention of increasing the number of pages. This might as an alternative take the form of the *Journal* appearing in future every two months. Six numbers of the present size would represent a 50 per cent. increase, which even then would be not more than three-quarters of the pre-war size.

The year was marked by the return to this country and to Scandinavia of the Norwegian–British–Swedish Antarctic Expedition to Queen Maud Land, with which the Society, in cooperation with the Scott Polar Research Institute, had been closely concerned since the first tentative suggestions by Professor Ahlmann during the war, followed by definite plans put forward to the Society in 1946. It is, of course, too early to assess in any detail the scientific results of this great expedition, but it is already clear that its achievements both in science and in exploration will rank it as one of the most important in Antarctic history. Meteorological work included a full two-year series of observations, with some 650 radiosonde and rawin ascents. An extensive and up-to-date glaciological programme was carried out. Seismic observations of the thickness of the ice shelves and of the inland ice showed an unexpectedly thick ice cover in the interior from a 7000 to 8000 feet plateau height almost down to sea-level.

If I were to single out other prominent expeditions of recent date I would specially mention Mr. Shipton's reconnaissance of the southern side of Mount Everest last autumn. During the present spring the two most important expeditions in the field have been Shipton, again, on his attempt on Chooyu, and Mr. Duncan Carse on his pioneer exploration of the interior of South Georgia. Very shortly two other outstanding expeditions will take the field, Shipton yet again in the main attack on Mount Everest, and Commander Simpson, who will take an expedition to the interior of North East Greenland. The latter is an expedition which one welcomes very warmly indeed. It sees the revival of naval interest in the polar regions and for size can only be compared with Scott's last expedition to the Antarctic in 1910. The party is predominantly supplied by the three fighting services, with the Navy in the lead, but the Merchant Navy also plays its part and there is also a stiffening of scientists and others from the Universities. I should like to add that the financing has come in the main from certain oil companies interested in the training possibilities and that if it had not been for their generous action it would certainly not have been possible to launch the expedition even as a smaller venture. It will now leave this country fully staffed and with the most up-to-date equipment, and it can well be described as likely to become the most important Arctic expedition from this country since 1875.

Before closing I should like to speak of our support of exploration in general. The last two to three years have seen a welcome expansion of exploring expeditions. These have been of the traditional types, either large expeditions with public help or small private ventures. In the last few years however the private venture has become prominent in a way that was not perhaps unexpected, for there has grown up a lively interest in summer exploration at many Universities both in England and in Scotland. Before the war
adventures of this sort were as a rule confined to the three large Universities, Oxford, Cambridge and London, but they have now spread over a much wider field. The Society particularly welcomes this development. As in the past, the parties include among their personnel scientists of all types, geographers, geologists, archaeologists, biologists and others. The Society has always taken a very wide view of the activities which it can support and is prepared to give its blessing to all forms of scientific exploration, as has been its custom throughout its 120 years of existence. We naturally give priority to expeditions with a predominantly geographical flavour, but at the same time we think it right to encourage today, as in the past, those who, like Francis Galton in Africa, or H. W. Bates and Alfred Russell Wallace in the Amazon basin, or A. F. R. Wollaston in New Guinea, have other, and in these particular cases biological, as well as geographical interests.