

THE NEW AGE

INCORPORATING "CREDIT POWER."

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF POLITICS, LITERATURE AND ART

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NOTES OF THE WEEK.

"I said in this book that it would very much surprise people if they were only told how many things the Queen could do without consulting Parliament, and it certainly has so proved, for when the Queen abolished purchase in the Army by an Act of Prerogative (after the Lords had rejected the Bill for doing so), there was a great and general astonishment.

"But this is nothing to what the Queen can by law do without consulting Parliament. Not to mention other things, she could disband the Army (by law she cannot engage more than a certain number of men, but she is not obliged to engage any men); she could dismiss all the officers, from the General Commanding-in-Chief downwards; she could dismiss all the sailors too; she could sell off all our ships of war and all our naval stores; she could make a peace by the sacrifice of Cornwall, and begin a war for the conquest of Brittany. She could make every citizen in the United Kingdom, male or female, a peer; she could make every parish in the United Kingdom a 'university'; she could dismiss most of the civil servants; she could pardon all offenders. In a word, the Queen could by prerogative upset all the action of civil government within the government, could disgrace the nation by a bad war or peace, and could, by disbanding our forces, whether land or sea, leave us defenceless against foreign nations."—*The English Constitution*, by Walter Bagehot.

This passage is at the head of an article in the December number of *The Round Table*,* entitled "The Prerogative of Dissolution." It is an article of extreme importance, and we strongly advise our readers to consult it, especially those who are interested in exploring the strategical means by which the usurpation of political power by the banking monopoly may be destroyed. In saying this it must not be supposed that the anonymous author (all contributions to *The Round Table* are anonymous) had any intention of supplying information or suggesting arguments which might conduce to this end. In fact, unless he is being very subtle, his treatment of the question raised is calculated to consolidate rather than destroy the supreme power of effective government possessed by the credit monopoly. In spite of this, or better, because of this, his article

provides the most powerful and illuminating stimulus to the strategic counsels of credit reformers that we have yet noticed.

Before discussing it we must first recommend readers to refer to our issues of December 12 and 26. In the former we wrote on electoral reform with reference to Lord Hewart's retirement from the Committee of Inquiry. In the latter we returned to the same question with reference to Mr. Garvin's attempt in the *Observer* to popularise the idea of Parliament's becoming a Council of State. Our reason for the recommendation is that our comments in the two issues mentioned happen to constitute such an opportune introduction to the article in *The Round Table* that only those readers who have had witness of similar coincidences in the past will readily believe our statement that we have only just seen it. But it is a fact, and being a fact it affords still one more proof of how inexorably the thoughts and arguments of different writers concerning the problems of the economic and political situation are being drawn into the swirl of the Social Credit synthesis. Here were we, at the above dates, busily engaged in showing how the banking interests were stabilising their dominance over democratic institutions; and there was this writer equally busily engaged in showing that the Crown is still constitutionally entitled to do the same thing. In a word, while we were showing up the bankers' game, he was revealing ways in which the King could spoil it. We need say no more in justification of our admonition to our readers that on no account should they neglect the duty of carefully studying the article.

Let us now quote his up-to-date version of the Royal Prerogative. (In reading this and any further examples of the theoretical powers of the King, notice how frequently and aptly they describe practical powers actually exercised by the banks.)

"Bagehot's enumeration, though impressive, neither claims to be, nor is, complete. It is easy to enlarge his list. We all know, for instance, that the King can do

*Macmillan. 5s.

no wrong. This means *inter alia*, that if he should elect to commit theft, arson or murder, there is no known legal machinery for calling him to account. His own writ cannot issue, nor his own courts execute process against him. He cannot be 'estopped.' Periods of limitation do not, with some exceptions, run against him. Even from the common incidents of mortality he is immune. He is never a minor: he cannot even—at any rate viewed as a corporation sole—die. Nor can anything short of an Act of Parliament shear him of these extraordinary and in some respects miraculous attributes. The passage of such an Act he could easily frustrate without breaking the law. For, first, he need not summon Parliament oftener than once in three years; secondly, he can dissolve it as soon as summoned; and thirdly, if in the interval Parliament did succeed, by some prodigy of legislative expedition, in passing through both Houses a Bill abridging the prerogative, the King could legally reduce it to waste-paper by withholding his assent.—The King in fact still enjoys legal powers which any despot in history might envy."

The author then asks how it is that in the face of such despotic theoretical power British subjects enjoy a much higher "degree of practical liberty" than the subjects of any Republic. He answers that it is because Ministers of the Crown, and not the Crown personally, wield the discretionary powers referred to. He thus draws a distinction between the legal rights of the Crown, and the conventional rights of the Crown, under the Constitution, and discusses the matter in a chapter entitled "The Conventions of the Constitution." We give one extract.

The Conventions of the Constitution.

"Are there any occasions on which the Sovereign could properly act in reference to the prerogative of dissolution on his own personal initiative, either by refusing a dissolution to a Ministry which advised it, or by enforcing a dissolution against the wishes, or otherwise than upon the advice, of the Ministry? In law it is beyond dispute that the Sovereign could do both these things, if occasion arose, to-morrow. Could he do either of them without violating the conventions of the constitution, which in other respects regulate so narrowly the exercise of his unquestioned legal powers? What convention, if any, governs the exercise of this particular legal right? In what precedents is it to be sought? Does the same rule prevail in relation to the Dominions and the mother country? And so far as the mother country in particular is concerned, does the emergence of a third party, involving minority government as a malady of recurrent if not of chronic incidence, require that a new convention should be called into being to meet the needs of the future?" (Our italics.)

He refers to the action of George III. in 1783 and of William IV. in 1834. In both cases the Sovereign dismissed a Ministry which enjoyed the confidence of a majority of the House of Commons, replaced it by a Ministry which did not, and granted the latter a dissolution. But in neither case did the King dissolve Parliament without reference to the advice of his Ministers for the time being. To find the last instance of this one has to go back to William III. in 1701. Next the writer discusses whether the King can refuse to dissolve Parliament when advised to do so by his Ministers. On this point he cites Sir William Anson whose view is that a request for a dissolution is not, according to constitutional practice, refused, but cannot always be constitutionally demanded. It can only be properly demanded "if there is reason to suppose that the House of Commons and the electorate are at variance." (Anson.) But the same authority suggests that, apart from any rule regarding propriety of Ministerial advice, "when the conduct of Ministers is sufficiently improper the personal exercise of the prerogative, by way of forcing or refusing a dissolution, might conceivably with advantage be revived." (These words are those of the writer of the article.)

The author now turns to "The Practice in the Dominions," incidentally describing the circumstances of Lord Byng's refusal in 1926 to grant a

dissolution when requested to do so by Mr. Mackenzie King. The bearing of Dominion procedure on the main question lies in the fact that the Governor exercises the Crown's prerogative; and therefore the ways in which Governors have exercised these powers with the acquiescence of the Dominion politicians are all contributory factors in establishing what are the rights of the Crown itself.

In his next section, "The Crown in the Constitution," the author surveys his previous analyses, and applies them to the current situation. The conventions of the Constitution are not fixed, he says: "They are born, they grow and they decay."

"For instance, it is more than possible that when King George V., acting on his own initiative in almost the only sphere in which the Sovereign can still unquestionably do so, sent for Mr. Baldwin and not for Lord Curzon in 1923, he initiated a new convention that the Prime Minister must be a Commoner."

Conventions, he says, "lose all value if they change too rapidly, but they are liable to a like degeneration if in a changing society they remain static." They should, and mostly do, display "rather the elasticity of equity than the rigid lineaments of law." The aim of most of them is to secure that, as Dicey has said, the powers of government including those covered by the prerogative, shall be exercised in conformity with the will of the nation.

At this point we arrive near the nerve centre of the political system. The author completes his line of argument by stating that the validity or propriety of all the conventions surrounding the Royal Prerogative rests on a presumption. "There is a presumption that the will of the nation is reflected by the majority of their representatives in the House of Commons." The importance of this fact cannot be over-emphasised. It is in the nature of a presumption that it is susceptible of rebuttal. Evidence assailing the presumption now in question is therefore, as we shall see, evidence against the validity (or at least evidence for reassessing the validity) of all the conventions derived from it. The author's account of the connection between the presumption and the conventions makes this evident. He says, immediately following his statement of the nature of the presumption of the nation's will:

"Hence the convention that Ministers shall be selected from the party of which that majority consists, and shall resign so soon as they cease to command such a majority. Hence, again, the convention that the King shall act on the advice of Ministers, that Parliament shall be summoned annually, and many others. The convention that the prerogative of dissolution shall be exercised on the advice of Ministers and not otherwise is at first sight an exception, because, at least in the common case where a dissolution is advised by a Ministry defeated in the House of Commons, it is being exercised on the advice of men who, *ex hypothesi*, have lost the confidence of that House. Yet, inasmuch as a dissolution may as a rule only be properly advised when there is good reason to suppose that the majority of the House of Commons does not represent the majority of the electorate, this convention has in truth precisely the same object as the others, namely, the maintenance or restoration of harmony between the executive and the nation. The object is attained by enabling the nation to determine the composition of a new House of Commons which, in turn, determines, indirectly, the composition and policy of a new Ministry."

Does the existing convention, asks the writer, serve this vital purpose? Or are there cases in which Sir William Anson's suggestion for investing the King with a wider field of personal initiative should be adopted? He puts the following hypothetical cases: (1) A Government might introduce a measure prolonging its existence indefinitely or for some inordinate period. (2) A Ministry might violate a major convention, such as refusing to resign after repeated

defeats in the Commons on measures of capital importance. The third case must have a paragraph to itself.

(3) "Or again, assume three parties were returned, none of them possessing a clear majority: each in turn attempts to form a Ministry but in each case the other two join forces to oust it. None of the Ministers advises a dissolution. A forced dissolution by the King might, in these improbable circumstances, afford the only exit from the resulting deadlock." (Our italics.)

As a converse case the author supposes a Ministry which represents a minority of the whole House being defeated on a measure, and requesting and getting the grant of dissolution. After the election it finds itself still a minority Ministry, and asks for another dissolution. In that case the King might, he submits, properly refuse assent.

He concludes this section on the constitutional question with the following generalisation.

"The King is a vital balancing force in our constitution. Its other limbs—the Ministry, Parliament and the electors—could not work without him, or some force or factor corresponding to him. He is potentially the only immediate protection available to the nation against an unscrupulous Government or Parliament. He is this by virtue of the wide legal powers which he possesses but hardly ever exercises. The reason why the powers are so largely held in abeyance are, first, that the King and his advisers have in the past steadily aimed at reducing to a minimum the occasions which require active Royal intervention. Such intervention is almost bound to work to the disadvantage of some party or group, which may then be tempted to make the hereditary monarchy a target of attack. A second reason is that the exercise of the King's powers is rendered largely unnecessary by the mere knowledge that they exist. The powers, however, are not dead but sleeping, and a suitable emergency would rouse them from their slumber." (Our italics.)

Apparently the writer considers that a "suitable emergency" is presented by the tightening of the Parliamentary deadlock, for his next section is entitled "The Three Party System." It first appeared in 1923 when Mr. Baldwin, after the election, found himself the leader of a reduced and a minority party, though still the largest party. He met Parliament and was defeated. There was no dissolution; but Mr. MacDonald assumed office. The question was then mooted whether, if Mr. MacDonald sought then and there to introduce measures inviting and sustaining defeat, the Crown would be bound constitutionally to grant a dissolution at his request. Lord Oxford questioned whether it would in a speech at the National Liberal Club reported in *The Times* of December 19, 1923. He spoke as follows:

"It [the prerogative of dissolution] does not mean that the Crown should act arbitrarily and without the advice of responsible Ministers, but it does mean that the Crown is not bound to take the advice of a particular Minister to put its subjects to the tumult and turmoil of a series of general elections, so long as he can find other Ministers who are prepared to give it a trial. The notion that a Minister—a Minister who cannot command a majority in the House of Commons, but who is in a minority of 31 per cent.—the notion that a Minister in these circumstances is invested with the right to demand a dissolution is as subversive of constitutional usage as it would, in my opinion, be pernicious to the general and paramount interests of the nation at large."

The writer endorses Lord Oxford's judgment, asserting that if Mr. MacDonald had proposed a dissolution early in 1924, it would have been open to objection by reason of the improbability that "the

electors' disapproval of his programme of nationalisation" would have "evaporated in the course of a few months." Many months later the King did grant Mr. MacDonald a dissolution, but this was after a "vital new issue" had emerged which had "not been before the electors in 1923." The writer mentions another reason, namely, that "it is generally believed" that Mr. MacDonald's request was preferred and granted "with the tacit assent of the leaders of the Opposition parties."

This is a remarkable conjunction of reasons for this writer to offer. The emergence of a "vital new issue" itself constituted, according to his previous reasoning, a perfectly valid occasion for the King to grant a dissolution. In that case the assent of Opposition leaders was superfluous. On the other hand, assuming for the sake of argument that the occasion for the granting of a dissolution was not valid, on what principle did the acquiescence of the Liberal and Conservative leaders make it valid? Is there now a "new constitutional convention" by virtue of which the leaders of the two Oppositions, as well as the visible Ministers of State, are accounted the King's Advisers? The issue here is precisely the same as the one we raised when dealing with the "Council of State" idea on December 26. We said:

"The idea of a 'Council of State' is really the idea of stabilising, and even formalising, the exercise of executive power by the three Front Benches in concert and putting all the private Members under a concerted scheme of discipline."

We went on to say that this "Council" could boycott the debating of inconvenient proposals, arrange its own agenda, and control the Whips; and that generally we should have an "All-Party veto on Party legislation." We are now in a position to add the further point that the Council could create or destroy constitutional conventions as it wished, and thus exercise the power of veto on the discretion of the Crown. If that be the direction in which high political intrigues are taking us, it will soon be nonsense to speak of the King as the nation's "protector" against "an unscrupulous Government or Parliament."

Notice how this tendency towards snatching away Crown prerogatives links up with the so-called "constitutional" objection to Lord Hewart's participation in the counsels of the Electoral Reform Committee. As a Peer, he reminded the objectors of his proper functions as such, and declared:

"These are not privileges to be enjoyed. They are responsibilities to be discharged. And I have not the smallest intention of handing on my office shorn of any of its duties or obligations, or of submitting, whether by actual conduct or by passive acquiescence, to any diminution of the rights exercised by my illustrious predecessors."

If we acclaim that language as proper to a Lord Chief Justice and a Peer of the Realm, how much more shall we not do so in respect of the King?

The writer concludes his article with a section entitled "A Possible New Convention." He points out that the Three Party system has entered a stage when the prospect of a clear majority for any of them is remote. It is common ground that the largest party must, in the first instance, be placed in office, but this leaves unresolved the doubt whether the electors would desire either of the other parties to maintain it in office or whether they would not rather see a combination of the minority parties turn out the majority party. "They have in a sense," he remarks, "pronounced against all three, and therefore the right of free and easy dissolution loses much of its value, and may become a nuisance."

This leads up to his conclusion that "where three parties exist, and none has a majority, either the Monarch should have wider powers to refuse a dissolution, or, perhaps better, the leaders of the various parties should enter into some tacit or express understanding that dissolution should not be advised with the same freedom as before." He gives reasons for objecting to the first alternative, the chief being that there is a "strong feeling in the country" against enlarging the practical sphere of Royal influence—particularly since the particular power to be enlarged "would make an appeal to the electorate more difficult." He approves the second alternative, and suggests:

"that the leaders of the parties should enter into some understanding as to the circumstances in which dissolution might properly be advised. Such an understanding might involve as its corollary that the party in power should suspend the introduction of its more contentious measures for a reasonable time after its assumption of office, and that the parties not in power should, subject to such suspension, enable the party in office to carry on."

As an example of fatuity in one aspect, impertinence in another, and irrelevance to any intelligible principle in another, we have seen nothing to match this proposal. It picks holes in itself all over itself. If electors regard it as a "nuisance" to be consulted in elections why should they object to the King's having the right to refuse dissolutions? If they want to be consulted, the logical occasion for consulting them is just the occasion which the proposal adduces as a plea for not consulting them, namely when they have given an inconclusive decision. It is a gratuitous assumption to argue that the electors would repeat their previous vote and return the same parties in the same numbers even were a second election to take place a month after the first. They might if nothing were done in Parliament during that month. But if—and why not if in earnest?—the leaders of the largest party took office, brought in the "contentious measure," got defeated, and appealed to the country again, this dramatic circumstance itself would alter the conditions of the election. For one thing, there are several people known to us who hold politics in derision and do not vote, who would willingly go to the poll for any party which displayed such evidence of courage and sincerity. Secondly, the nature of the contentious measure on which the Government chose to provoke and incur defeat would do a great deal to help the electors to take their bearings anew. Lastly, the financial resources of the parties being unequal, a second, or it may be a third, election might force one of them to drop out of the running, thus altering the balance of voting power in the House. But whatever the immediate alteration following on this collapse, the electors would at least realise that their "will" was expressed by the purse and not the programme—a most healthy and dynamic piece of education for them which would certainly produce visible consequences in subsequent pollings. These and many other considerations go to show that if the supreme problem is to obtain a decisive mandate from the country, and if political leaders desire to solve it, there are ways of doing so.

But they do not so desire. They are only too content to produce recurrent deadlocks. However diverse their programmes are in form they are identical in principle in that they are designed to fulfil bankers' doctrine. The result is that each programme involves the infliction of sacrifice on somebody as the price of affording alleviation to somebody else. At one time it was Conservatives and Liberals only—two groups—each asking for a man-

date to search the other's pockets. At the present time it is three groups, each wanting to search the other two. While this goes on the deadlock cannot be unfastened; and since the political leaders do not know, or affect not to know, how to achieve construction without confiscation, they are naturally tending to ignore the will of the electorate altogether.

The proposal provides that a Government should hold up contentious legislation "for a reasonable time." What is a reasonable time? And what happens at the end of it? Why not be frank and say that the contentious measures will be definitely abandoned? And if so, and the electors' voting power is effective only for agreed measures, why not be consistent and abandon elections? Where on earth is the sense, let alone honesty, in three parties inciting the public to take part in their quarrels when they are pledged to each other not to do any of the things they are quarrelling about? Behind the proposal is the implicit presumption that all the electors want is for the Government to "carry on," irrespective of whether it performs what it has promised.

In the final paragraph of the article the writer claims that his suggestion is, as a matter of fact, being applied already. He says:

"Mr. MacDonald's declarations imply that he will not for two years 'ride for a fall,' while Mr. Baldwin's assurance that he will 'abstain from factious opposition' implies a promise of sufficient support, positive or negative, to keep him in office for a reasonable period. Or the understanding might be that, if the party in power introduced a vitally contentious measure within a certain period—say, two years—the Prime Minister should advise the King to test whether Parliament could maintain an alternative Government before granting a dissolution. Whether such an understanding, or the principle underlying it, should be given a more formal expression or a more permanent operation is a question which fully deserves all the consideration which statesmen can give it."

The last sentence is sound sense. And others besides statesmen—or at least the statesmen we are accustomed to—will be giving the matter all the consideration it deserves.

In our survey of the ground covered by the article we have, it will be noticed, refrained from commenting on several matters which have a special interest for students of the credit-problem. The trouble is that they all involve such pregnant issues that one might justifiably write a long article on each. It has therefore been better to assemble them for exhibition in the first place so that everybody can have all the necessary material for reflection. In the meantime we shall content ourselves with one or two remarks of a general nature.

It is vital to take note that the Crown's powers, under the law of the constitution, are practically unlimited. The King can do what one of the London financial journals threatened Mr. Lloyd George that the City could do, namely, destroy any Government whose policy he disapproves. But under the conventions of the constitution the King cannot exercise his powers. As we have seen, the King is inhibited from despotic acts by a "presumption" that the electors "will" him to act by the advice of his Ministers, these Ministers deriving their power of advising him by reason of their representing a majority in the House of Commons. Contrasted against the practical limitations of the Crown's legal power is the practically unlimited power of the

banking monopoly, a power without legal sanction in a broad constitutional sense. Omitting intervening stages of the argument, which are only too familiar to our readers, we can affirm that the overriding convention in operation to-day has the same effect as if the King were formally bound to act by the advice of the Directors of the Bank of England. They are virtually a self-constituted, unrepresentative Ministry, possessing the exclusive and permanent privilege of advising the King. The question therefore arises: On what "presumption" is this "convention" founded? Perhaps constitutional lawyers will make some research into the matter. If it is "improper" in a constitutional sense for a political Ministry to carry legislation continuing it in office, it is all the more "improper" in the case of the bankers; for as regards the offending politicians it can at least be pleaded that they were once approved as Advisers by the electorate, whereas in the case of the cosmopolitan money-controllers nobody has approved them, nor does anybody know anything about them.

We could continue this line of argument indefinitely, but it is sufficient that we indicate its direction. The problem is not to build up proofs that the credit-monopolists are usurpers of political power. The problem is how to turn them out. There is one way which can be dismissed from consideration at once; namely the use of the vote. It is obviously useless to make a selection between Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. MacDonald when it is certain beforehand that the advice which any one of them will tender the King on fundamental issues will be tendered under force majeure exercised equally on all of them by the money-interests. When bankers advise Ministers what to advise the King there may be a "presumption" on which this privilege can be construed as a constitutional convention, but whatever it might be it certainly can have nothing to do with the "will of the people." So we can chop up our ballot-boxes.

Now any alternative to the use of voting power involves the use of, or the power and intention to use, physical force in either its positive or negative aspects. It involves active or passive resistance to the usurpers and their policy. Hitherto it has been the custom to describe anything of this sort as "unconstitutional." But, as the writer of the article under discussion most opportunely says, constitutional conventions must change with changing circumstances. Very good. And a supreme change has taken place, namely the transference of the Royal Prerogative to the Bankers. In trying to abate an open, royal, despotism we have established a secret financial despotism. The second is so much the more oppressive than the first in that the financial despots run no risks, for they control every avenue of publicity which might otherwise expose them.

Now, suppose that the King suddenly thought to himself: "I renounced my powers in the belief that my subjects would exercise them. But I find that a small group of financiers (some of them not British) have usurped these powers and are exercising them for their own purposes. I propose to demand them back." And suppose, as an initial test, the King refused assent to an onerous Budget. What would be the constitutionally legal position? Some light is thrown on such a question by the writer of the article, who cites Queen Victoria as having once recorded the view that whatever the antecedent doubt as to the constitutional propriety of any act of the Sovereign, the doubt would be resolved according to whether the act came off successfully. That is to say, the Crown justifies itself legally by chancing

the practical consequences. "Right or wrong, We have done it. Now then, what are you going to do about it?!"

So granting that what may be called a Royal Revolt can be construed as constitutional, the real question is whether it could have a successful issue. Obviously if the King acted by himself it would not. It must be presupposed that he acts with the assent of a group of supporters who can wield power other than the financial power controlling press-agitation and "public opinion." That power resides in the War Office, the Admiralty and the Police. In Italy, Signor Mussolini was successfully put into his dictatorship by financial power exercised irrespective of the constitution. He was able to overcome the initial handicaps of comparative obscurity, and of appearing to be disloyal. It should be all the easier for Royalty itself in this country to resume a dictatorship. It potentially commands the loyalty of every soldier and sailor, and would actually command it given the support of the heads of the forces.

The M.M. Club will meet Wednesday, January 8, in Room 22, Kingsway Hall, at 6.15 p.m. Discussion on current events; report from Committee.

ECONOMIC PARTY DISCUSSION.

All Social Credit Reformers are asked to be the guests of the Economic Party at an informal discussion to be held at Spiers & Ponds Cafe, Ludgate Hill Station, on Wednesday evening, January 15th, at 6.30 for 7 p.m. Light refreshments.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS.

In Jewry once of ancient time
The innocents were slain
By Herod's soldiers, for he feared
Lest One should come to reign:
But we a subtler way have found
To scotch these tiresome elves:
We raise a panic cry of "Fire!"
And let them kill themselves. C. J. H.

"Canberra. Mr. Anstey, Minister of Health . . . in an interview said: 'The Australian banking system was most reactionary, and a Bill would shortly be introduced to bring Australian banking law into line with British banking law . . . banking institutions must cease to be the masters, and must become the servants of industry.'" (As in Britain?)
—Evening Standard.

"I don't care what you call it, whether rationalisation or scientific management or what, our problem is to reduce the surplus capacity of this country."—Mr. W. L. Hitchens, Chairman of Cammell, Laird and Co., Ltd., at the launching of the Athellaird, December 18.—(Lloyds List, December 19.)

"A curious sequel to the complications arising out of the Hatry case is the institution by the big banks of special lectures on financial problems, at which the more abstruse points of company law and finance are explained. I understand that only really responsible members of the banking staffs attend these lectures, which deal almost wholly with the difficulties of the present situation. According to the pessimists, the tangle will not be thoroughly straightened out for two or three years, during which period a great many people will not know exactly how much of their wealth is 'real.'"—The Star, November 2.

"A World Dictatorship is the triumph of Fear." C. H. Douglas.

"Of all the single factors which go to make up the sum of modern productive capacity, money is the least important, and if any proof of this were needed, the late war furnished that proof."—C. H. Douglas.

"Real economic progress in a capitalistic world is impossible without ever recurring writing off of capital."—Financial Times, December 30, 1929.

Bank Pamphleteering.

Here is a little puzzle that readers may like to inspect. It will be remembered that Mr. Snowden made a speech at the Labour Party Conference last year dealing with financial policy. The London General Press have just published a pamphlet over the name of Mr. Snowden, entitled "The Bank of England and Industry," and announce that its contents are "based on" the above speech. From our recollection of the newspaper reports of the speech at the time we should say that this pamphlet consists entirely of extracts; that is to say, it has not been "based on" the speech, but rather the speech was based on the matter in the pamphlet. We consider it probable that the matter now published is a transcription of the notes with which the Treasury provided Mr. Snowden, and instructed him to incorporate in his address to the Conference. The pamphlet, on this view, may be looked upon as an authoritative reproduction of Mr. Snowden's original brief. The whole of the matter, if not spaced out, would fill only four leaves of this 8-leaf paper-covered document; and yet the price asked for it is one shilling. Twopence would undoubtedly have been a remunerative price to charge. Evidently the general public are not expected to buy it, but equally evidently a demand is expected from somewhere. We infer that it is intended to circulate in high-financial circles in this and other countries, and that its function is to make clear to the interests concerned how much of what Mr. Snowden actually said was authoritative, and represented the essential elements of the Treasury's view, and how much was Mr. Snowden's improvisation. For instance, there is no mention of Mr. Snowden's supercilious remark at the Conference at the end of an expository passage: "Now, I have made it all as clear as mud"—a remark which was in truth as much a reflection on the quality of the arguments he had used as on the intelligence of his audience.

Those students of the credit problem who like to have authoritative references available in a handy form will perhaps think it worth their while to invest their shilling in this synopsis. It covers the following points: (a) a justification of the raising of the Bank Rate, (b) the statement that the Treasury has no influence on the settling of the Rate, (c) the assertion that credit-issues are automatically governed by gold reserves, (d) the denial that a rise in the Rate causes so much trouble as critics allege, (e) the statement that the credit problem can only be solved by international co-operation, but (f) in the meantime it is necessary to have a "full enquiry."

Another pamphlet issued by the same publishers contains twelve leaves and is priced at two shillings. It is entitled *The Control and Reform of the Bank of England*, and its author is Roy Hopkins, formerly Assistant Editor of *The Economist*. For all that his contribution to the controversy is worth he might just as well have initiated a discussion as to whether bankers should wear brown boots. His introduction is a puff of Mr. Montagu Norman and of the Bank. Of the latter he says that

"Through the control of monetary and credit policy it can appreciably affect the four most fundamental factors in our daily existence—price levels, employment, profits, and the purchasing power of wages."

This will be a handy quotation to remember, because if a non-elected institution can appreciably affect each of these factors in turn, or all of them together, it can of course obscure, complicate and frustrate the counsels or acts of an elected Parliament which tries to deal with them. And if Parliament does not deal with them there is nothing left for it to deal

with, and no reason why we should have a Parliament at all. If the people of this country continue to acquiesce in the situation thus disclosed by Mr. Hopkins, they will be in an analogous position to that from which the Chinese are now extricating themselves in the case of the extra-territorial privileges of foreigners. Two-thirds of the Directorate of the Bank of England represent non-British financial and industrial interests; yet there they are, in occupation of the territory of the "four fundamental factors," and in enjoyment of exemption from the rule of British laws. The only difference is that in China the general laws of the Chinese and the special laws of the privileged foreigners have been visibly comparable, and everyone could see the nature and implications of the anomaly: but in Britain the privileged cosmopolitan financiers have insinuated their special laws into the code of general law, so that hardly anybody is consciously aware of the clash between the two systems, though everybody feels the effect in his "daily existence."

In these circumstances Mr. Hopkins is able to, and does, make a great show with "reforms" of the brown-boots order. He spends two pages in discussing how the Court of the Bank nominates new Directors and why it does it that way. He next deals with various criticisms. He rejects the Labour Party's demand for the "public control" of the Bank, firstly professing not to be clear about what this formula means, and secondly objecting that if the Directorate represented the Treasury, the Board of Trade, Industry, Labour and the Co-operative Movement, the board would never be able to take quick decisions.

"By the time all conflicting points of view had been heard the practical banker would be in despair. It may be well to have some measure of control over the Bank, but if the directors are to decide practical banking problems, it is not wise to hamper them with controversy on theoretical matters. In short, the proposals of the Labour Party do not take into sufficient consideration the need for an executive body rather than a controlling body."

Mr. Hopkins does not think it worth while explaining (a) why the board's decisions must necessarily be taken in a hurry, or (b) why, if that be shown, the points of view should necessarily be conflicting. He invites the reader to "consider these men asked to decide in half an hour if the Bank Rate should be raised." The implied assumptions that the raising of the Rate must always be a sudden emergency-operation, and that it must always provoke opposition when proposed, rest solely on a theoretical basis. The whole credit problem rests on the question of what is the right concept of a sound financial policy. Mr. Hopkins dismisses this question as a "theoretical matter." He overlooks the fact that according to how it is answered depends a whole chain of practical consequences, including even the necessity or otherwise for unity or disunity, quickness or slowness of decision, on the executive. It does not enter into his idea to conceive that there can be conditions in which the Bank Rate need never again be changed—except progressively downwards to a point where the aggregate interest-revenue of the whole banking system represents adequate remuneration for the persons engaged in the service. Nor can he conceive that, supposing otherwise, changes in the Bank Rate could take place under conditions where no legitimate industrial or other interests would be adversely affected by the movement, whether up or down, and that therefore there would be no conflict among the executive however fully representative.

It is the proper function of the political Government to decide where to go, and that of the banking executive to prepare the route-map. Parliament is the proper controlling body, and the "practical bankers" are the proper executive body. When Mr. Hopkins charges Labour with overlooking "the need for an executive body rather than a controlling

body" he is right insofar as he is referring to the composition of the Bank Directorate. That is to say, it is asking for trouble to introduce into a committee of technicians a group of non-technical people to control them through the method of participation in the technical work of that committee. Even if the newcomers were unanimous about where they wanted to go (which they are not) they would yet be a hindrance rather than help because they are not experts in route-planning. They would be very much like those fussy old gentlemen who give their gardeners general orders overnight and then interfere with the work by giving particular orders at hourly intervals all the next day. The principle of popular representation, on which the Labour Party base their reform, is not applied in the right direction. Technical efficiency has no relationship with popular representation.

But now we must turn round on Mr. Hopkins. He had better ask himself why it is that Labour finds it a popular proposal with its own supporters (and a growing number of other electors) to dilute an executive committee with political controllers. We suggest that the reason is because the executive committee itself has usurped the function of political control. Directly a committee of technicians whose proper duty it is simply to map out the best financial route to a chosen political destination proceeds to impose its own choice of destination on the politicians, it is obviously the duty of the politicians to enter into the counsels of the committee. Technicians who act *ultra vires* must expect non-technical interference. It is begging the whole issue for them to complain that the interference impairs their efficiency, because, since their efficiency is being applied illicitly, the more it is impaired the better.

Suppose a case. A car-owner instructs his chauffeur to get the car out to take him to Birmingham. He steps into the car, settles down to read his paper or have a snooze, and off they start. Ultimately the car stops, and the chauffeur gets down, opens the door, and reports: "We have arrived at Manchester, sir." Suppose that this sort of thing happens, not once, but continually. What will the employer do? He will either sack the chauffeur, and drive himself, or he will insist on riding in front with him so as to get a hand on the steering wheel. In the second alternative the chauffeur might reasonably point out that this dual control of the steering-wheel not only delayed progress but was even dangerous. But the obvious retort of the "interfering" employer would be: "You drive where I tell you, then I will sit inside." Constitutionally, Mr. Snowden—representing the electors—is empowered to act as car-owner, and, again constitutionally, Mr. Montagu Norman—representing the banking technicians—has the right of a hired chauffeur, and nothing more. But in actuality, as the whole country has witnessed, Mr. Snowden not only lets Mr. Norman drive the car where he likes, but has publicly affirmed Mr. Norman's right to do so. "I am your Minister," said he to the assembled bankers on a celebrated occasion. And in less flagrant degree all Chancellors of the Exchequer do the same thing. Their Cabinet colleagues do the same thing. Parliament, the Press, the Pulpit, Economists, public and business men of all grades, and millions of toddling little electors do the same thing. "Drive where you like; we will sit inside." And sit they do, chattering, reading or snoozing between the election of a Parliament and the dissolution of a Parliament; and if at the end of the run Mr. Norman does omit to announce at the door that they have duly arrived in Hades, the reason is that there is no need for him to tell them so.

If the car be considered as a taxi-cab one can say that the only service a Chancellor of the Exchequer

performs for the taxpayers inside is to read the clock (which the bankers have designed and fitted) and put the figure into a Budget. Is it anything to be wondered at, or objected to, that to-day there is an impulse manifested in Labour circles to get a hold on the steering-wheel? Call it an imperfect remedy if you will: nevertheless it is a sign of a newly-released instinct which, after the manner of the carrier-pigeon, must soar up in circles to sense the straight way home.

In the meantime Mr. Hopkins selects as the most important proposals for Bank reform those outlined in the report of the Liberal Industrial Inquiry, *Britain's Industrial Future*. He names two of the members, Mr. Walter Layton, Editor of the *Economist*, and Mr. J. M. Keynes, as representing "our best economists of the practical school." The reforms consist of "practical" suggestions for improvements in the chauffeur's uniform and for limiting his emoluments, but have no relation at all to the "theoretical" question where he drives or whence he gets his orders. Thus:

1. Dividends to the Bank's shareholders should be fixed. (But not its earnings. "Surpluses" are to be used to increase the "financial strength" of the Bank.)
2. The Directorate of the Bank should be smaller.

The publishers of Mr. Hopkins' pamphlet say in their announcement of it that it is

"Moderate and friendly in tone . . . and ends by urging that such reform as is desirable should come from within lest it be imposed from outside." (Our italics.)

This passage is a typical example of the way in which defenders of banking privileges utilise the sounds of words to obscure meanings. The exact meaning here can be paraphrased thus: The Bank had better effect such reforms as it likes lest the politicians impose on it the adoption of such reforms as it likes. But the impression given by the passages is that the Bank is being advised to adopt wise reforms lest the politicians impose on it unwise reforms. The financiers, like Gilbert and Sullivan's Admiral, may still rule the King's Government if they will polish their buttons carefully.

We give the titles of other pamphlets advertised by the London General Press:—

- A Financial Plan for the Prevention of War.* Sir Henry Strakosch, G.B.E. 1s.
- Goodwill in Industry.* A Symposium by Five Practical Men. Introduced by the Rt. Hon. H. P. Macmillan, K.C., LL.D. 2s.
- Central Banks.* Sir Ernest Harvey, K.B.E. (Director, late Comptroller of the Bank of England). 2s.
- International Industry and the Young Plan.* Lord Melchett. 2s.
- Industrial and Railway Amalgamation.* Sir Josiah Stamp, G.B.E., D.Sc. 2s.
- Controlling the Output of Gold.* Professor R. A. Lehfeldt, D.Sc. 1s.
- Home, Colonial and Foreign Borrowing.* P. E. Gourju and Hargreaves Parkinson. 1s.

We have not received any of these pamphlets for review, but feel entitled to suggest that they consist of recipes for button-polish; that comprehensively and indirectly they are providing polemical powder and shot for the use of "friendly" critics of the Bank's policy and administration. In spite of the high price of these publications they ought to be worth their money to "unfriendly" critics as well; for it is always of advantage to be able to peep into the "speakers' handbooks" provided by banking interests for the use of their propagandist agents. The publishers, too, apparently have a high opinion of the merits of the pamphlets, for they require in each case 3d. per copy to cover postage, a fee which, considering that their average purchaser will receive his copy by registered post.

Change of Heart.

In the review entitled "Money Books" (THE NEW AGE, December 26), in dealing with a particular book on monetary reform, the Editor wrote, "This is the old, old story: 'Here is my remedy: but it won't work unless your heart is changed.'" (Our italics.)

According to the "International Star Bulletin" (January, 1930 issue) Mr. J. Krishnamurti was asked the following question: "What comfort will, say, a hungry, unemployed man find in your message?"

The reply was:

"Probably none, Friend; the hungry and the unemployed are your creation, the production of your civilisation. And to alter civilisation, which is the expression of life, the life must be made pure and released from bondage. If the life is impure, the civilisation will be impure. And the hungry, the unemployed, the oppressed, are the result of a civilisation which is crooked. So it is no good merely giving food to the hungry: you must alter civilisation, its very thoughts and feelings. That means you must return to the source, which is life, and purify that life."

This, also, is the old, old story: "Here is my remedy—Life: but it won't work unless you change your life (heart, thoughts, feelings?)."

Before anything can be done to make a civilisation fit for human beings to live in, the individual must undergo a change of heart—life—thought—feeling.

But this necessary change of heart cannot, or does not, take place because each individual is the product of, and is embedded in, a crooked civilisation. On the other hand, it is the interplay of individuals which produces civilisation. "Do rats eat cats—do cats eat rats?" Does the chicken produce the egg, or the egg produce the chicken?

"Change the economic system!" sounds the trumpet call of the New Economists.

"Before you can do that there will have to be a change of heart in the individual!" comes the echo from the New Psychologists.

The New Economist, from his own wearisome experience, is driven to agree that if only people could break free from orthodox teachings and generally accepted modes of thought and feeling, and look at things afresh from a different angle, it might be possible to bring about the desired economic adjustment. It would bring itself about.

The New Psychologist is bound to agree that warped and frustrated personalities are very largely the direct or indirect result of a wrong economic system.

So it seems to be tit for tat between these two all along the line of argument. In the meantime—year after year, do not forget—the more or less hungry unemployed, his wife and his children, must needs show the only change of heart possible in the circumstances: that is, a hardening of the heart (and a tightening of the belt).

We are sometimes told that, if only the International Financiers could suffer a change of heart, they would at once recognise the rightness of the new economic analysis and proposals, and would, therefore, bring about the necessary adjustment.

We may take it for granted that those who accept the new economic analysis and proposals have, by some means or other, been able to break free from orthodox economic teachings and, to some extent at any rate, from generally accepted modes of thought and feeling. Such individuals are, nevertheless, the product of a crooked civilisation. How did they manage to experience what seems to be a radical change of heart? (For it must be admitted that the moment an individual has been able to grasp the new economic teaching, his outlook upon life in general and even his everyday actions tend to change; he tends to become a different being.)

Was this change of heart brought about by saying to himself, consciously or subconsciously, "I need a change of heart?" Evidently not.

Was it brought about by reading books or listening to lectures on modern psychology—or by being psychoanalysed? No.

The change of heart was brought about, it appears, by something that would seem to have little enough to do with anything spiritual, psychological, or religious—the somewhat humdrum study of a so-called dry-as-dust subject: *economics*.

A few, at any rate, scattered here and there, found themselves driven by—by what?—to "return to the source, which is life, and purify that life." All life on this planet depends upon food, warmth, and shelter. They began again at this physical foundation, this physical starting-point, and they have had a glimpse of a vision of the New Age.

But—and this is the crux of the matter—they are so few, and, naturally, they are without financial support. They know, in a general way, what to do, but what are they to do in order to do it?

Economic studies appear to have brought about a certain change of heart in these few. Is it to be hoped that some 47,000,000, or even 1,000,000, of our population can ever be induced or will of themselves find an urge, to worry their way into and through so difficult a subject? It is, obviously, out of the question. That being so, how is the change of heart in the many to take place?

When you study the question of the shortage of purchasing-power you must have in your stomach enough food to allow the mind to function smoothly. If your stomach were crying for food, if you were shivering with cold because you could not buy enough coal and clothing, you would not bother your head with the economic problem in general. You would not be able to do so, because you would be bothering very much about your own immediate and particular economic problem. This immediate bother is not how to change or adjust the present economic system, but how to squeeze a few pence or shillings out of it in order to go out and get a meal of fish and chips or a second-hand overcoat—now, at once.

There is, then, the *study* of artificial poverty and its solution, and there is the *experience* of artificial poverty which often tends to prevent such study.

The majority of people in these islands are not suffering so acutely from a shortage of goods and services as to render them unable to think. For the most part they manage to rub along, and in many cases fairly comfortably. Even those on the tax-paid "dole" are able to keep going without looting and rioting. Nevertheless, they are all, in this or that degree, anxious, uncertain, worried about money and how to pay their bills. They are all finding things difficult, having to skimp and scrape. They are all, in one way or another, *experiencing* artificial poverty.

If this artificial economic pressure increases it will plunge them still further into the intimate, urgent and immediate details of the domestic struggle to make ends meet; it will make it even more difficult for any thoughtful consideration of the economic system as a whole to take place.

At the same time, this first-hand experience of artificial poverty, especially if it is prolonged, will bring about a change of heart. To begin with, of course, a hardening of the heart, a bitterness and a dangerous hopelessness. These symptoms are to be noticed at the present time in almost every stratum of our national life.

Such physical and mental experience creates the culture-bed for a fundamental change of heart—an individual and mass resurrection—which may yet allow the few to set right what is wrong.

J. H.

Drama.

Ten Nights in a Bar Room: Gate.

"Ten Nights in a Bar Room, or Ruined by Drink," is the Gate Theatre's second annual joke. Last year's, "Fashion," was distinguished by subtlety, this year's by breadth. It is, as the programme says, "presented in the manner of a provincial stock company of the period," so far as the songs and turns given by the actors between the scenes are concerned, but not in any other way. Both players and audience were too self-conscious and too determined to pull grandfather's beard; everybody was too anxious that his neighbour should not suppose him to be taking the business seriously. It is appropriate for wit to be delivered self-consciously; but as it is the very essence of the comic to do childish things in a grown-up way (for example, Grock), the production would have been even more funny—and enjoyable—had there been a little less of conscious burlesque. For me the star-turn of the evening was Mr. Harold Young's singing of "Why Did They Dig Ma's Grave So Deep?" There was precisely the right pinch of burlesque, neither to cause the audience to mock with him nor to fight to retain consciousness; apart from that Mr. Young re-created something that provoked not a laugh of derision but a smile of understanding. The air with which he wore his sideboard whiskers and his posture of confidence that his sentiments would be approved moved the hall backward in time.

The ten nights are real stuff. Long before the ex-miller inn-keeper is murdered by his drunken son by a blow on the head with a brandy bottle, his wife's intuition, that riches on the sale of drink will bring less happiness than poverty grinding corn, is inductively established. Even so early as golden-haired little Mary Morgan's singing to drunkard Joe Morgan, "Father, Dear Father, Come Home With Me Now," it is amazing that landlords were ever stout or cheerful, or had such aristocratic daughters of their own. If the appeal to the audience to sign the pledge had come immediately after Joe Morgan's delirium tremens by the bedside of his dying child, instead of at the end of the play, Band of Hope canvassers—a necessary adjunct to the production—would have run out of forms. What did follow Joe's fierce struggle with a bevy of boa-constrictors was an interval, in which, sad to say, the weaker and more incorrigible members of the theatre stole out for a drink. When they came back it was to see little Mary, with the help of a crane off, wafted to heaven across a picture of an angelic choir, and, after the landlord's awful death, the old age happiness of the reformed Joe Morgan.

Everything contributed to the impression that this moral reform theatre was a laid ghost of the Victorian past being mocked by the beyond good and evil present. The moral reform theatre still persists, of course, complete with staring eyes, open mouths, and bursting hearts; and in places, with oranges and peanuts. I lately saw "The Ticket of Leave Man" at Collins's Music Hall, gagged up-to-date, and followed by an immense audience with the greatest excitement and interest. It is a theatre with considerable significance; indeed, if it were entirely to be ridiculed I do not believe that Mr. Godfrey would waste his producer energy on it. It was probably more the folk-theatre of the nineteenth century than anything which calls itself folk-theatre is of to-day. It was, of course, the theatre of a folk-illusion, namely, that obedience to the law and the employer, hard work, and abstention from the bottle (for the folk the flesh is not much of a temptation) would surely lead to success including happiness. Dr. Neil Montgomery remarked of the Middle Ages that they were neither wholly saintly nor wholly merry, but a war between unruly vitality and a saintly ideal, witness the animals and gar-

goyles of Gothic on the one hand and the arches on the other. The nineteenth century was neither entirely "social" nor entirely competitive. Men liked to see their neighbours fall while yearning to help them up. The anti-drink play-writer and audience accepted drink and crime as Spurgeon, in the same mind, accepted and talked about hell; as one who wouldn't be without it, for the personal voluptuousness to be derived from watching others squirm in it. No doubt the children of the obedient, hard-working, and temperate, are all now members of the middle-classes, clerks, Civil Servants, teachers, and the like; and they mock this theatre without knowing why, and without, therefore, being ashamed. It is, however, the parent of the disillusioned and sceptical, though more self-conscious, proletarian theatre, the theatre of such as O'Casey and O'Neill, Kaiser, Toller, and Glover. The people who patronise this theatre to-day, identifying themselves in day-dreams with the hero of melodrama and weeping with the victims in earnest, are the reason why the sceptical folk-theatre exists. It is particularly appropriate that these revivals should be at the Gate Theatre. Until the after-war period these plays were the only ones to take the folk seriously, and although they betray a naïveté which is comic and a childlike consciousness which is pathetic, no person with his roots still in the folk regards them but with some affection and understanding.

The revival of the song or "turn" between the scenes suggests a comment on the present tendency towards swifter and more uninterrupted precedence towards swifter and more uninterrupted precedence towards swifter and more uninterrupted precedence. The old-fashioned melodrama is as unnaturalistic as anything may well be, but its make-believe grips the emotions of the audience; and a comic or sentimental interlude does not disturb the continuity of the main play, to which one rather comes back refreshed. Of the individual performances I liked particularly Miss Elsa Lanchester's as Mary Morgan—as well as her singing, "After the Ball"—Miss Viola Lyel's innkeeper's wife, and Mr. Arthur Goulet's as Joe Morgan. Mr. Goulet played as one experienced in melodrama, with not a shade too much of the conscious burlesque attitude. Mr. Arthur Chesney's landlord, otherwise excellent, was marred by an occasional crowding of his words which caused them to be lost.

Pygmalion: Court.

Whatever may be said of Shaw's ideas—and he is as uncertain of himself, in spite of his dogmatism and bluster, in "Pygmalion" as elsewhere—this play is one of the finest of all comedies. The first act, outside St. Paul's, Covent Garden, not only fulfils the "sport," which Shaw said it was, of reminding the public of its existence; it starts the comedy at the beginning, and is a stroke of great craftsmanship. By means of it Shaw postpones his explanatory section until the second act, nearly hiding it altogether, behind the expansion of the most nearly human and lovable of all Shaw's types, developed here fairly fully as Alfred Doolittle. The scene where Eliza is first tried out is a theatrical delight from beginning to end, while Doolittle's re-delight from the undeserving poor's philosophy on three thousand a year compels one to remain for the final act.

Shaw is so very unsure of himself in "Pygmalion" that it almost suggests his choice of dramatic debate in order that he might exercise the democrat's and dictator's right to contradict himself. The idea in his essay in phonetics is that the scientist can make silk purses out of sow's ears if he be clever enough; but when he contemplates the sow's ear he changes his mind. Eliza passed off as a duchess was Higgins's work; when, at the sight of her father in a collar and suit, she relapses, Shaw almost joins the Tories who bewail human nature,

and the poets who believe that only breed has worth. In Shavian terms, he did not know whether he believed in technique or in the Life Force, regarded as two different forces.

Mr. Esmé Percy's Higgins was a fine piece of work, taking full measure of advantage from the number of times Mr. Percy has played it. It is a part in which Mr. Percy can let himself go. The Alfred Doolittle of Mr. Wilfred Lawner, who played so fine a Major Petkoff in "Arms and the Man," was interesting and whimsical; but it lacked something of the gay scepticisms that one associates with Doolittle, who should be orator rather than pleader. The quality of plaintiveness belongs to the deserving poor. As Eliza Doolittle Margaret Macdonald did not seem happy with Cockney vowels, nor did she display the mobility of face and temper to be expected from such a type. Miss Amy Nowell's Mrs. Eynesford-Hill and the bystanders in the first scene were excellent.

PAUL BANKS.

The Screen Play.

Films of the Year.

The history of last year's films is that while the American product sank to the lowest pitch it has known since Germany taught Hollywood that there was an art of the screen, the English film rose to the highest level it has ever attained. Significantly enough, both factors are due to the same cause, the talkies, and it is also significant that while Hollywood has devoted itself to mass production without troubling either to develop the new artistic technique necessary or to learn how to write dialogue for the screen, Elstree has produced few but very good films.

The two best films of the year to my mind were silent, namely, "Homecoming" and "En Rade," a German and French production respectively. Actually "En Rade" does not belong to 1929, but I include it not merely because it is one of the half-dozen best films I know, but because it was not available to the British public until a few months ago. Of the four best talkies three, "High Treason," "The Informer," and "Atlantic," are English, and it is fitting to mention that the first was made by the Gaumont Company and the others by British International Pictures. The fourth was "The Fox Movietone Follies of 1929," which I regard as the only completely satisfying sound film I have yet seen; it is the only one in which the union of sound with picture has not merely yielded a definitely cinematic result, but in which sound has also formed an integral element without which the picture would definitely have failed to achieve unity. Even the best English talkies are either not entirely free from the characteristics of the photo-play, or are also good in the silent form.

To complete the list of the dozen best films of the year, always an arbitrary and difficult task, I would name one English, one French, two American and two German. The first is "The Lost Patrol," in which the British silent film reached its high-water mark of achievement to date. The French film is "Thou Shalt Not," and although I am not certain whether it belongs chronologically to 1929, I include it for the same reason as "En Rade." The American films are "The Last Command" and "White Shadows in the South Seas." Of the German pictures, "Temptation" and "The Water Rat," the first is notable both for its admirable direction, which is in the best German tradition, and for the acting of Gustav Frohlich and Betty Amann, and the second for the fact that it is still the only picture in which Jenny Jugo has been given a role worthy of her talents and properly suited to her.

It will be observed that all these second half-dozen are silent, although "White Shadows" has

a synchronised accompaniment. Of the films to which I would accord honourable mention, most are American, and most belong to the category which unites sound work with good entertainment. These American pictures are "The Bridge of San Luis Rey," an ambitious effort which did not quite succeed, but which showed that even the "talkies" cannot entirely kill artistic aspiration in Hollywood; "Our Dancing Daughters," the most convincing social document which America has yet written in celluloid; "Forgotten Faces," which first showed the full extent of Clive Brook's gifts as an actor; "The Trespasser," which revealed Gloria Swanson as one of the few female American film stars whose artistic stock did not suffer a severe slump so soon as we heard them speak; "Show Boat," "Show People," "Spite Marriage," which I regard as the best thing Buster Keaton has ever done; "Three Brothers," the most natural American "talkie"; "The Idle Rich," "The Perfect Alibi," and "The Canary Murder Case." The last two are good specimens of well-acted crook drama.

My remaining honourable mentions are English; "Tessa," notable for its very brief but extraordinarily effective dialogue sequence; "Would You Believe It?" the funniest and the cleverest funny film of the year; "Bluebottles," and "Royal Membrances," in which the camera illustrated history over three decades. The most original contribution to the art of the screen was Walter Disney's delightful series of "Mickey Mouse" cartoons, in which sound, but not speech, is used with impish humour, and the most notable omission of the year was that it saw no new Chaplin film. The most notable revival was that of "Greed." Finally, Elstree gave us "Juno and the Paycock." This was privately shown on the last day but one of the year, and will be reviewed next week.

My list of the six worst films of the year contains only one British production, "The Co-optimists," which the new Metropole Theatre included in its opening programme just after Christmas. This is not a film, but a series of photographed revue turns, strung together without cohesion, and characterised by completely uninteresting music and about the worst photography I have seen since 1914. Its sponsors describe it as "typically British." I would re-christen it "The Co-Pessimists." The other worsts are "Noah's Ark," "Midnight Daddies," and "Coquette," in which Mary Pickford was ill-advised enough to make her "talkie" debut. As a runner-up, I would include "The Glad Rag Doll." This list does not profess to be exhaustive; I purposely abstained from seeing some of the most advertised American "talkies" of the year.

DAVID OCKHAM.

Self-Control and Birth-Control.

Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay present a careful and temperately argued case against artificial methods of birth-control.* Generally, their teaching amounts to the doctrine that what is gained for the flesh is paid for by the spirit. The human organism, they point out, is so complex that no one can foresee the ultimate consequence of an immediate adjustment of personal habit to external circumstance. They conclude that the only safe method of birth-control is continence. In support, they question whether the upholders of contraceptive methods do not overpress the assumption of the irresistibility of the sexual appetite, and so spread the impression that every attempt at self-control in this direction is futile and even in-

* "Birth Control and Human Integrity." By E. V. and A. D. Lindsay. Congregational Union of England and Wales Inc. Independent Press, Memorial Hall, E.C.4. 96 pp., paper. 1s. 6d. net.

jurious. It is hardly necessary to comment that their book is unlikely to convert a birth-control propagandist; but that does not appear to be their object. Their appeal is rather to the general public not to take for granted contraceptive expediency as the last word on the subject. For example:

"If the sex relationship divorced from child-bearing is to be accepted as a normal part of married life, either the status of such sex relationships outside marriage should be raised, or the status of marriage must ultimately be depressed."

"It is interesting, by the way, to note that where the most light-hearted treatment of sex relationship for the married as well as the unmarried is frankly advocated and logically explored, children are held to be best provided for when they are removed from their parents."

The following quotation is given from the 1924 Report of a centre for teaching birth-control:

"Many married couples among the poor have only one room to live in, and under such conditions even one child is a doubtful blessing. In practice it often happens that father and mother and five or six children are packed into one room—sometimes with only one bed. The only effective way of dealing with this problem is to teach all married women, and especially the poorest, how they can limit their families without denying to themselves and to their husbands that physical union which is the basis of married life."

The authors oppose the attitude expressed in this passage, and give their reasons, in the course of which they refer to an episode in which a poor woman told the chairman of a women's Labour Group: "Oh, I don't mind babies; it's the only time I have any peace." Thus, frequency of intercourse, not frequency of pregnancy, was the objection of this woman, whose point of view, according to the authors' informant, was typical of a good many others who had confided in her.

The reader must by now realise that the intricate problem of reconciling the birth-control arguments, for and against, is derivative from the problem of poverty. The Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics in its annual report for 1928-9 quotes the case of a woman in Walworth who, when asked if she could afford to pay anything for the advice and appliances she had requested, replied that she was willing to give a little, but had only 1s. 3d. on her, and had no other money, and must keep some for tomorrow's dinner (her herself and five children). Generally speaking, people who cannot pay are ashamed to keep going to the clinic to get something for nothing. So poverty prevents the use of contraceptics on the one hand, and on the other induces incontinence through overcrowding. Under the existing financial system, therefore, the objectives of both parties to the controversy are bound to be frustrated, and the only fruitful activity in which they can engage is to take part in the movement for the reform of financial policy.

J. G.

Reviews.

The Irish Future and The Lordship of the World. By C. J. O'Donnell (Ex M.P., London). (Cecil Palmer. 5s.) Vividly written and containing a great deal of very interesting and unusual information, this is a rather bewildering book and suffers from an attempt to cover too much ground. Beginning with the chief object of "calling on all Irishmen the world over to take all necessary measures to rescue the Catholics of Ulster, of whom I am one, from a 'degrading thralldom,'" the author deals in convincing fashion with the vital importance to world peace of harmony between Great Britain and U. S. America, and the key position to that relationship held by the Irish race, especially by the 30,000,000 citizens of U.S.A. claiming Irish descent. The reactions of events in Ireland on that large and influential body, and particularly those arising from the actions of the Northern Irish Government when dealing with the large Roman Catholic minority within the six county area (one-third of their population), are clearly indicated and should be carefully studied by all those concerned. Unfortunately this

is unlikely, and British imperial world policy will probably continue to include the subsidising and support of Orangeism, for the sake of retaining a military and naval "jumping-off ground" in Ireland. In spite of Mr. O'Donnell's valiant attempt to claim the British Empire as an appanage of the Celtic race, and his chapter on "The Celtic Empire of Great Britain," the fact remains that, although the Celtic element has rendered invaluable services in building up the British Empire, the great mass of the Irish nation scattered throughout the world are opposed to that ideal. Indeed, it is largely due to that element that the ideal of a Commonwealth is taking the place of an Empire, as a link to keep the English-speaking nations together. Unfortunately, like so many expressions of opinion on world politics, this book is vitiated by a lack of knowledge of the part played by our present financial system in the relationships of nations and problems of peace and war. Readers of this journal, at least, can only deplore the lost opportunity and wasted talents which would seek to explain "racial antagonisms" by merely postulating "the inherent combativeness of human nature." Human nature will certainly fight so long as our financial system merely presents the alternatives of either starving or fighting. But it is when the author wanders off to discuss the onus of responsibility for the Great War and, still more, when he introduces a chapter on India (even when he apologises for doing so), that his readers may plead bewilderment as to the exact point Mr. O'Donnell wishes to make with this book entitled "The Irish Future." On both these subjects, however, the author presents facts and a point of view which merit attention, and we hope a wide circle of readers will be found for this thought-provoking book.

T. K.

Shakespeare and Other Literary Essays. By G. W. Foote. (Pioneer Press, 3s. 6d.)

All except one of the essays in this volume are reprinted from the "Freethinker," of which journal G. W. Foote was editor from its foundation in 1881 until his death in 1915. They are written in good journalese but not in very good English: there are too many clichés, which are forgivable in hasty writing, but not in book form. In discussing "Measure for Measure," for instance, Foote talks about "its grim and relentless treatment of the darker side of human nature. Yet through all the mire of that tremendous drama the noble Isabella moves with spotless and radiant purity. In presence of that divine woman," etc. I do not discover a fine critical mind behind that sort of writing, and though it is honest, it is not very valuable.

J. S.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

MUSICAL COPYRIGHT BILL.

Sir,—Mr. Kaikhosru Sorabji's reply to my letter is, in picturesque and incendiary language, as delightful as nearly all his criticisms. He is only wrong in his facts.

First, it is simply not true that "there is only one side that matters in the question of the Musical Copyright Bill—the side of the composers." Clearly the publishers come in, as do also those who, after all, pay the fees in dispute.

Secondly, if it be "a damnable tyranny and outrage" to attempt compulsorily to fix "what a composer" may charge for the use of the product of his talent," there is nothing to prevent the said composers from putting any price they like on their published works, specially increasing the price of music which ostensibly is for public rather than private use.

Mr. Sorabji's scepticism "over the tales of alleged wrongdoing on the part of the Performing Right Society," if by doing the expression he means accusations of exorbitant charges, is proof that he does not know the facts; and when, further, he adds "the quarters whence they originate are alone sufficient to make them suspect," he is only gratuitously offensive.

What Mr. Sorabji does not see is that the illustration he uses completely damns his defence. Assuming his figures to be correct, I find that the hotel in question resented the being called upon to pay less than a penny in the £1 of the fees of the players in the band. I know places where, on such a basis of calculation, village institutes and the like are paying between 5s. and 10s. in the £1—which by some fair-minded people is considered not a hypothetical but an actual "damnable tyranny and outrage." "QUITs."

JOAN OF ARC.

Sir,—I think that Mr. Berrill will find another serious discussion of Joan of Arc in Miss M. A. Murray's "The Witch Cult in Western Europe," together with a great many other things of interest.

H. C.

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The Social Credit Movement.

Supporters of the Social Credit Movement contend that under present conditions the purchasing power in the hands of the community is chronically insufficient to buy the whole product of industry. This is because the money required to finance capital production, and created by the banks for that purpose, is regarded as borrowed from them, and, therefore, in order that it may be repaid, is charged into the price of consumers' goods. It is a vital fallacy to treat new money thus created by the banks as a repayable loan, without crediting the community, on the strength of whose resources the money was created, with the value of the resulting new capital resources. This has given rise to a defective system of national loan accountancy, resulting in the reduction of the community to a condition of perpetual scarcity, and bringing them face to face with the alternatives of widespread unemployment of men and machines, as at present, or of international complications arising from the struggle for foreign markets.

The Douglas Social Credit Proposals would remedy this defect by increasing the purchasing power in the hands of the community to an amount sufficient to provide effective demand for the whole product of industry. This, of course, cannot be done by the orthodox method of creating new money, prevalent during the war, which necessarily gives rise to the "vicious spiral" of increased currency, higher prices, higher wages, higher costs, still higher prices, and so on. The essentials of the scheme are the simultaneous creation of new money and the regulation of the price of consumers' goods at their real cost of production (as distinct from their apparent financial cost under the present system). The technique for effecting this is fully described in Major Douglas's books.

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