

THE NEW AGE

INCORPORATING "CREDIT POWER"

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF POLITICS, LITERATURE AND ART

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CONTENTS.

| | PAGE | PAGE | |
|---|------|--|-----|
| NOTES OF THE WEEK | 205 | THE PROPHETS.—III. The Cocktail School. | 212 |
| Further reflections on the Irish situation—the futility of political power unless conditioned on credit control—the essential need for price-control, which is the other half of credit-control. The Birmingham Municipal Bank and its history—Mr. Hilton's book—Mr. Neville Chamberlain's foreword—the truculent Treasury and the British Corporation. | | By Hugh Ross | 213 |
| THE SILENCE OF DISSENT (Editorial) | 209 | DRAMA. By Paul Banks | 213 |
| CURRENT POLITICAL ECONOMY. By N. | 210 | <i>Love at Second Sight. Fresh Fruit. The One-Eyed Herring.</i> | |
| Labour's taxation policy—Press comments on it. | | PASTICHE. Afterthoughts. By C. Hayward | 214 |
| VIEWS AND REVIEWS. Notes on Mechanism. III. By R. M. | 211 | LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | 214 |
| | | From C. H. Douglas, Stephen W. Smith, Hugh M'Diarmid, and John Henry Clarke. | |
| | | VERSE | |
| | | <i>The World Imprudigal.</i> By L. S. M. (210). | |

NOTES OF THE WEEK.

The next reel of the Irish political film has commenced to uncoil itself. Last week, it will be remembered, we left the cinema with a vivid final close-up of Mr. Cosgrave, hand behind ear, waiting in melodramatic tenseness for rumours of the battle. What would happen at the by-elections? Well, it is victory. So to-day we witness the opening episode of Mr. Cosgrave, the man of action, telephoning, pressing electric-bell buttons, and otherwise preparing for a new advance into the enemy's country. Fate has, unkindly as we believe, handed him the privilege of making the next move; and he has used it to decree a dissolution. He and his associates may secure a clear majority over the de Valera-Johnson combination in the new General Election; for that is what they are counting upon. But if and when that occurs the real test will begin. The irony of politics generally under the existing financial regime is that leaders of the Opposition have all the enemy in front of them, while leaders in office have enemies behind and before them. It is the very well for a political Administration to man the front-line trenches, with the financiers' heavy artillery in legal support behind, but these latter fellows are none too careful(?) in their range-finding, and the chances of their accidentally(?) blowing up their own infantry are far from negligible. We might reasonably put it very much higher than that, and assert that no changes of political Administrations nowadays take place unless and until such domestic "accidents" occur. Acute students of English politics will agree that Mr. Baldwin was blown out of office from the rear to allow Mr. MacDonald to take the position; and that Mr. MacDonald suffered the same mischance to let Mr. Baldwin come back, and to-day there is no doubt at all that Mr. Baldwin is expecting a screeching message from supporting emplacements that it is time he got out of it to make room for the Liberal Kings of the East.

The moral of all this is that a party of politicians should think twice about accepting unconditionally the prize of office. Unless it is ready to make drastic alterations in the principles underlying political Government, and knows how it is going to do so, its tenure of office will be short, and its prospects of doing anything in the meantime to placate electors suffering under economic restrictions will be nil. Take one illustration. The mere attempt to balance a Budget within the framework of accepted financial principles is a step towards leaving office. Not that the attempt is not thoroughly approved by high-financial institutions; it is: but a political Government is expected to make the attempt without promising political and economic disturbance; which is impossible. People who take on a job like this might just as well promise electors to make hair-springs out of putty. We shall take no serious interest in the fortunes of any prospective Government unless it insists on controlling *all* the material factors which make government effective. The main factor is Credit. And it so happens that an analysis of the origin and nature of credit shows it to be more clearly the property of the community as such than any other factor in the case, and therefore the very first tool of policy of whose exclusive control a representative Government should be jealous. But that is not all. Any Government which takes control of credit and misuses it will commit an error which will end in a reversion of that control to financial institutions, a control which will then be faster secured by them than before. That is why we are more insistent than ever to-day on the Price aspect of the Credit question.

So many publicists of all sorts are challenging bankers' control directly, or implying such a challenge by questioning their policy; and so many are the facilities for doing so afforded by a Press notoriously sensitive to high financial whims and prejudices, that we should be thoughtless indeed to ignore the possibility of some financiers' plan to

concede these agitators what they want, trusting to see them make a mess of their new power. So strongly is Finance organised internationally that by private arrangement between the Central Banks' presidents a very large measure of control could be tentatively conceded in complete safety to *one given country* (e.g., England) so long as the control were used *only to regulate the quantity or flow of credit*, a restriction which would entirely satisfy the vastly preponderating number of credit-reformers of every brand outside the Social Credit Movement. What would happen? It would depend on the Party in power. You might see an attempt to keep prices still by opening and shutting the credit-tap according to which way they were going. You might see expanded credit issues made to producers in the hope that prices would automatically fall as a result of quicker production. Or you might see Labour restricting credit facilities to "luxury" trades in order to extend them to the providers of the "means of life." Any or all of these experiments would leave the high financiers without a tremor, for although they were apparently exercising "control" of credit they would really be nothing of the sort. *Unless Credit is controlled at both ends it is not controlled at all.* The real control of Credit involves a consciously and deliberately induced relation between the rate at which it is issued and the rate at which it is called back. Bank loans measure the first rate; Retail Prices the other. Now retail prices will never adjust themselves in the right relation to outflows of credit because, among other things, under the existing "law" of "supply and demand," sellers are impelled to restrict supply to expand profit, no matter how great their capacity to produce. Therefore some other method must be devised which will ensure a profit to sellers no matter how much they sell. This desideratum should strike everybody as a reasonable one. It is feasible as well.

If modern industrial productiveness had free play, the rate of physical production in a given country might be expressed by the token figure 4; and the coincidental physical consumption of the whole community by the figure 1. That would give a ratio of 3 points expressing new means of future consumption, as against 1 point expressing that of actual achieved consumption. Now if a national financial accounting system were devised to reflect this ratio between rates of actual production and consumption, one would expect to see the collective retail price for the consumed production regulated so that it was one-quarter of the "cost" of all the production. (We speak of the *principle* here—the method and time of applying it form another part of the argument.) But this does not take place. The principle of charging for consumable goods now in operation forces industry to try its utmost to collect in retail prices the 4 units of money for the 1 unit of consumption. One reason for this is the very practical one that on the long before industry is ready to put on the market more than a fraction of the production brought about by these loans. For this purpose money must be extracted from the general body of consumers (individual capitalists as well as workers, bear in mind) at a very much faster proportional rate in relation to the original loan issues than industry can deliver goods to them in relation to physical production. A correct method of accountancy would produce the same effect as if the banks or some other credit authority were to say to industry:—

"Here, now, let us see what you have done with the £4 we lent you. Capital goods—machines, tools, unfinished goods, etc.—3 units of quantity; consumable goods—1 unit of quantity. Very well: pay us back £1 now, and we will only ask you for the other £3 in instalments as and when your other 3 units are transformed into consumable goods and are sold to consumers."

Let no reader turn aside to raise practical difficulties: we are endeavouring to illustrate a new principle. That principle would ensure that the community always had at a given time sufficient money in reserve (1) to meet the unrecovered (2) costs of industry arising out of previous times. To put it into the extended formula enunciated by Major Douglas—

"The cash credits of the population of any country shall at any moment be collectively equal to the collective cash prices for consumable goods for sale in that country, and such cash credits shall be cancelled on the purchase of goods for consumption."

Now look at the size of the practical issue involved. Consider, for instance, that a very high proportion of the total capital cost of the British railway system would, on this principle, be written out of the cost of fares. Whether it was done by actually writing down the fares or by issuing new non-repayable credit to consumers to enable them to meet existing fares is simply a matter of what is the more convenient method. But the fact remains that the incidence of railway fares on the private pocket could be fractionised, not to speak of avoidance of such tragedies as the Sevenoaks disaster which arise at bottom from the fact that under present conditions of financial stringency consumers have to take a margin of risk otherwise unnecessary. (That is, by the way, how Insurance makes its living and gathers up into its custody most of the consumers' money which Industry fails to secure.)

What has been said leads up to the Price-ratio procedure which is at the centre of the Social Credit proposals. Speaking of this we quote an old memorandum of Mr. Orage's which has not, we think, appeared in print before. It is a familiar objection that to regulate prices there would have to be a beauracracy to decide how. A less familiar objection is the precise opposite; namely, that the procedure suggested by Major Douglas is "too mechanical." It was on the latter that the late editor of this journal jotted down the following remarks:—

"It has been objected that the proposed Price-ratio is 'mechanical.' It is; but it is not arbitrary. The present Bank Rate, on the other hand, is both mechanical and arbitrary. Only about half a dozen people know how and why. Our Price-ratio is established on principles and statistics accessible to everybody. Nobody would fix it; it would fix itself."

In a word: when 4 happens, and 1 happens, and your principle tells you that the 1 ought to be stood over the 4, nobody need now decide that the price ratio shall be one-quarter; it has itself told the world what it is. You simply look and wonder, as Jan Ridd did at Lorna Doone.

1 "In reserve" does not necessitate their actual possession of the money: the essential thing is that they should have the legal right to receive it as and when they required it. Who *minds* it in the interim does not matter. The custody does not affect the principle so long as the custodian accepts the principle.

2 At first sight it appears that if industry at present gets back all its expenditure to repay the banks it does recover all its costs. But it doesn't. If any business man puts up a factory by using a bank loan the factory virtually belongs to the bank until he has repaid the loan. When he repays the bank he is virtually *buying his factory* from the bank. His cost arises at that point. He now begins to recover his cost, and is entitled to do so to the full extent of the amount originally loaned, for he took the risk of not being able to repay it after all his efforts. Yet however much he is entitled to collect the money the consumer has not got it: it had been cancelled by the banker when the loan was repaid. This important fact underlies the Social Credit formula that "the consumer pays twice over for what he buys."

The foregoing general argument for a new Price Policy has been summarised by a South African reader in a diagram described by Mr. Orage in another of the notes from which we have been quoting:—

"Please take paper and pencil and follow the directions to your own advantage. First draw three equal 1-inch squares in a row. Inscribe in the first the word 'Production,' and in the second the word 'Cost.' In the third square, bottom corner, draw a half-inch square occupying a quarter of the whole square, and inscribe in the remaining space the words 'Ultimate Products,' and in the small square the words 'Credit-Capital Products.' Underneath the three squares just drawn, draw three more as follows: under the 'Production' square draw a half-inch square and call it 'Consumption.' Under the 'Cost' square draw also a half-inch square and call it 'Just Price.' Finally, under the third square in the top row draw a 1-inch square and call it 'Present-day Price.' The diagram is now complete. All that remains is to appreciate it."

If economics were applied mechanics only, and not applied psychology at the same time, the fact that consumption dragged behind production might not matter; for total production might assume such large dimensions that the proportion consumed might satisfy all needs. Of course, there would be enormous visible waste, but at least it would not necessarily inflict penury on the community. But personal motives are such that no producer of goods will plan production a hairsbreadth beyond what his experience tells him he is likely to be able to sell. The consequence is that the total volume of consumable production is continuously being scaled down to the level of consumer-buying capacity. Now, consumer-earnings depend solely on current personal earnings. Hence a constant tendency to adjust future consumable production to current earnings. There is only one efficacious way of reversing this tendency: it is to guarantee to producers that current consumer earnings will be supplemented by other income. Against that guarantee producers would be willing to consider a Government Price-regulation policy as a purely business transaction. Unless they were under the hypnosis of biased propaganda it is nonsense to imagine otherwise. Even as we write, firm after firm is baling most of its profit overboard to keep afloat. No producer who looked after his immediate interests and did not listen to fairy-tales about ultimate general consequences would hesitate a minute to mark down prices to any extent so long as he saw a good profit out of the process. That profit can be assured to them all as the certain consequence of their agreeing to the above principle of price-regulation. That wipes out the Capital-Labour difficulty at once. There are wages and profits for all concerned on the producer side. But coincidentally the Price-regulation multiplies the purchasing power of these wages and profits. Thus, for the first time in economic history you make a proposition which elicits simultaneous instinctive response from the "boss," his men, and his customers. You are giving to all three the one thing they have all been quarrelling about. And by the same token you are giving to whole nations—or to sections of single nations as in Ireland—the Price-regulation on the Social Credit principle is roughly equivalent in its effect to that which would result supposing a combination of the political Government and credit-institutions were to guarantee to defray the overhead charges of every industry, *without recovering the cost in taxation*, leaving it to base prices on its direct charges. (It means more than this; but the magnitude of the offer is here sufficiently indicated without further amplification.)

Now, as regards Ireland and the Fianna Fail Party. Are these possibilities worth investigation or are they not? There is no doubt about the

answer. This is not a case of putting a few pence into a pocket here and there; it is a case of lifting the whole Irish population out of their penury and of dissolving all religious and political animosities in permanent and progressive economic co-operation. It would be a magnificent gesture if Mr. de Valera and Mr. Johnson would propose a political truce to Mr. Cosgrave on condition that he called an all-Party conference on this question. Certain principles as to its composition and procedure would have to be insisted upon, but they need not be discussed now. What we suggest will involve a searching test of character; and we hope that Fianna Fail will at least see the compliment involved in our making it. Not that we do not believe it to be a test of political sagacity as well. The surest road to political power is to renounce it on the formally declared ground that it cannot be used for the good of the Irish people under conditions of existing financial policy. Imagine the effect supposing Fianna Fail stayed out of the General Election and became "politically extinct" as the pundits call it. Supposing they said to Mr. Cosgrave: "You can have *all* the seats if you will further enquiry into the proposition that all Irish Governments are subservient to an external economic policy which is ruining Ireland. There is on the terrestrial plane such a miracle as a sowing in dishonour and a raising in glory—the shedding of the dross of political opportunism exercised in a region of myth, and the emergence of the pure gold of inspired purpose in a region of reality. A nation of poets will divine the new truth."

A lady clothed like Summer with sweet hours,
Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,

Three men were with her

Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said: I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue
And all the while she sung
There was no sound but long tears following
Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.
But those three following men
Became as men raised up among the dead;
Great glad mouths open and fair cheeks made red
With child's blood come again.

Bearing in mind the paralysing effect of re-vested savings on consumer purchasing power which the Pollak Foundation is so industriously proving in America our readers will be able to appreciate the significance of a book just published on Municipal Banks.* Two hundred and twenty-eight pages in cloth covers lettered copiously in gold, and all for 1s. 6d., suggests a subsidy, especially considering the small intrinsic sales-appeal of this kind of book. Whether the suggestion is credible or to appear. Let us listen to Mr. Chamberlain now to appear. That Municipal Banking is a good servant but a bad master has apparently been well impressed on that gentleman, for, immediately after saying what the book is about he hastens to reassure the reader as follows:—

"It will be observed that, although for convenience its title is abbreviated, the Birmingham institution is essentially a Savings Bank." (Mr. Chamberlain's italics.)

* "Britain's First Municipal Savings Bank: The Romance of a Great Achievement." By J. P. Hilton (Fellow of the Institute of Bankers), with Foreword by the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P. Blackfriars Press. 1s. 6d.

Now everybody say it after us: "Not 'Birmingham Municipal Bank,' but 'Birmingham Municipal Savings Bank.'" Better, "Birmingham Savings Bank": better still, "Birmingham Savings": but best of all, "SAVINGS." We hope everyone gets the idea. In case not, we will quote Mr. Chamberlain again:—

"Its main object is the encouragement of thrift; its funds are not used for the financing of commercial operations, but are invested in such a way as to give the maximum return consistent with safety and availability to meet its obligations. The fact that the financial relations between the Bank and the Corporation are of service to the latter also is an incidental but not an essential feature of its existence." (Our italics.)

We swear that this passage was never in Mr. Chamberlain's head until he saw it on the printer's proof-sheet. There has been a master hand at work. Notice first that what the Bank does *not* do—namely, puts money into trade—is specifically stated, whereas what it *does* do (i.e., purchases bankers' wares) is strangled by a string of terminological pedantries which reveal to an ordinary reader about as much as a fit of coughing. Next look at the care with which the writer makes certain that everyone shall learn that "incidental" is not the same as "essential."

The purpose of the book is to advocate an extension of Municipal Banking. Treating of this, Mr. Chamberlain waxes bold—

"Is Birmingham to have the sole monopoly of this fruitful idea, which in the space of less than eight years has enabled her citizens to accumulate £8,000,000 of savings?"

The answer being a vociferous No, Mr. Chamberlain then dampens enthusiasm a little by the warning:—

"Not that it would be wise or prudent to give powers like those obtained by Birmingham to any or every local authority."

Well, we can only say for ourselves that they could not do anything much with all Birmingham's powers. So much for the Foreword of the book. Enter Mr. Hilton with the "Romance":

"Crossing Chamberlain Square one memorable day in the dark period of 1915, the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P. (then Lord Mayor of the city), has told us that the thought of having a Municipal Bank first flashed across his mind."

The subsequent story will come best off the tongue of the immortal Alfred Jingle:

Second year of the war—money pouring out in wages—puzzle how to stop workmen spending 'em—frantic appeals from London to Lord Mayors—try get fellers put money in war loan—difficulty crops up—worker don't like investments—knows nothing about 'em—Chamberlain scratches head—Post Office banks not liked—no fuss putting money in, but hell of trouble getting it out—too official too—stop! good idea—Municipal Bank—posthaste to Treasury to say so—accepted—but no—hullabaloo from joint-stock banks—pecking in their dung-heap—confabs—more confabs—thing starts—but only Birmingham—what about other centres?—big wigs get busy—invent War Savings Certificates—do the trick better—start 'em—See how your money grows"—Birmingham scheme to stop at end of war—as you were—all serene again.

We have put nothing into this passage but what Mr. Hilton candidly narrates in the text. The Bank's powers were renewed after the war, but at the price of two reconstructions each accompanied by a revised set of regulations which are enumerated but are too long to reproduce. Whence the regulations proceeded readers of this journal will be aware. Mr. Hilton reproduces a letter from Mr. Otto Niemeyer, of the Treasury, to the Bristol Corporation when it desired to start a Municipal Bank last year. It is dated February 18, and contains the following:—

"I am directed . . . to inform you that they [Lords Commissioners] must request the omission of Part XVI. of this Bill. . . ."

The letter quotes two instances of Parliamentary disallowance of similar provisions to those Bristol desires, remarking:—

"My Lords would conceive that it was the intention of Parliament, while recognising the existing Birmingham Bank, not to encourage the establishment of further Municipal Banks."

Then the flat foot falls—the letter finishes:

"My Lords would therefore find it necessary to oppose the Bill if the clauses in question are proceeded with."

No one suggests reforming this truculent "House of Lords." Notice that the assumed "intention of Parliament" which is put forward as the basis of the Treasury's policy is the same vague consideration as guides the Justiciary when it finds reason to avoid the natural directions of a Statute, as we saw recently in the case of the Shop Assistants' Union. "Old girl, tell him my opinion," says the Parliamentary Mr. Bagnet. And the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street does so.

The Treasury's letter refers in one place to—

"the fundamental danger of small credit institutions nominally supported by public authorities and confined to comparatively small areas." Again: "There are very obvious dangers in borrowing short [i.e., taking deposits repayable on demand] and lending long [i.e., applying the money to housing and other permanent construction], and these dangers are much more considerable when the risk is concentrated in one place."

That there are such dangers need not be questioned, but they are not inherent; they arise directly from the over-riding regulations under which such banks are allowed to work. Even so, they are not so much "dangers" as difficulties, which, as soon as they appeared, would suggest their own solution. That is the real reason why the Treasury is insistent on preventing the "dangers" arising. As to the "fundamental danger" of short-circuiting credit in a locality where it is used, we should like to hear the proposition seriously expounded. The only "danger" is that a public authority which commences by dealing in existing credit may soon want to become a producer of credit, and next may wish to produce its own currency. At least, the natural development of events would push it in that direction. The "danger" then would not be to the public local Administration, but to the private credit monopoly.

One more point. Mr. Hilton refers to the growing demand for Municipal Banks and says that a Committee was appointed by Mr. Churchill in November last to consider "whether it is desirable to permit the extension of Municipal Savings Banks." (Notice the narrowed term of reference indicated by our italics.) The names of its members are given, and, obligingly enough, their qualifications—all of them financial. It has been "taking evidence" from Municipalities—not, let it be noted, giving evidence before Municipalities. It has still to make its report. Meanwhile we most urgently recommend all our readers who can influence municipal thought to get this book without delay. Its mere recital of the successive regulations laid upon the Birmingham Bank is alone worth pages of "Notes of the Week" to those who hold the clue to financial policy. We must thank Mr. Hilton for the most exhaustive and lucid way in which he has dealt with the history of that bank. Whatever other purpose his book may serve it will serve ours. It is the best Social Credit speaker's handbook we have ever seen from friend or opponent. What game is afoot that its publication is designed to further is a nice little conundrum upon which our readers generally can sharpen their detective faculties.

The Silence of Dissent.

Advocates of Social Credit principles suffer under a serious handicap in their efforts at propaganda. They are unable to point to a single big name on their board of directors; nor can they quote any favourable expert opinion in their prospectus. Think how things would hum if Lord Reading were to become President of their movement, and Mr. J. M. Keynes published a favourable report on its object. But it is an idle reflection: for these gentlemen would not have achieved their big names if they had shown the least tendency to question the soundness of existing principles of cred-finance and its accountancy. It is fundamentally true to say that the prestige of every public man in England to-day is held on a short lease from the Bank of England, and the maintenance of his public reputation depends entirely on how he sub-lets his influence. The position is exactly the same in the case of the Press. So the Social Credit idea has had to advertise itself as best it might under a virtual boycott. It speaks worlds for the dynamic power of the idea that it is even alive in the field of controversy, let alone extending its roots in all directions.

The history of the boycott is curious. At first, when *Economic Democracy* was published, the idea was permitted a little run. Reviews were published, and their average tenor was not hostile, if only non-committal. But between that time and the date when *Credit Power and Democracy* saw daylight something had been going on in the dark. Press cuttings were about as frequent as wasps in winter. "Douglas" was on the Index. There is enough evidence, some of it direct, but of course most of it inferential, to convince any investigator that the denial of publicity was concerted. There is no reasonable alternative hypothesis that will cover all the facts. We forget, for instance, whether it was the *Financial Times* or the *Financial News* (it was one of them) which, at a later date, discussed the Labour Party's Report on the Douglas Proposals, and managed to do so in a long leading article which never once mentioned Douglas's name nor even indicated the nature of his proposals, much less described them. Instead, the writer examined an idea suggested by an incidental paragraph in the Report, namely, the nationalising of the Bank of England, and thereby left his readers to suppose that this was what the [" "] Proposals amounted to.

It was a clumsy piece of work, and while it receded Social Credit publicity in one direction it conceded it in another. For in every capital in Europe, Asia, and America where copies of that authoritative newspaper found their way, they would reveal to astute statesmen (who always read between the lines) that a *Something* was taboo in Britain. Looking back, it will be seen that this was the finest piece of advertising that Social Credit could have. Would a single one of those statesmen waste a moment in getting particulars of what that important "Something" was which the non-ruling classes must not know about?

It is not surprising that to-day there are signs that the boycott is a little less rigid. The inner reason for this may be encouraging or discouraging. It may signify that organised finance has perfected its plans for preventing the adoption of the new idea, or it may be connected with the realisation in British governing circles that in the next war, towards which the world is fast progressing, Social Credit will have to be adopted as being the most potent stimulus to military power that has yet to be adopted; and that if Britain does not use this weapon the enemy might. In time of war the banker is not the top dog; the statesman and soldier decide policy. Hitherto they have accepted the advice of the banker: but the growing suspicion generally that finance is at the bottom of our restricted peace production is certainly

not going to be forgotten when the time comes for going all out on war production. And since THE NEW AGE has its supporters in both the Admiralty and the War Office, the necessity and the method for getting the bankers to "do their bit" will be realised there, and probably more quickly there than in the Cabinet.

After this intriguing digression let us conclude with a little piece of expert testimony in favour of Social Credit which somehow dodged the boycott. We cannot date it, but it is recorded in Mr. Orage's handwriting, and must have been written while he was editor of this journal. It is an extract from an issue of the Scottish Bankers' Association's *Bulletin*.

"We think that he [Douglas] has got hold of a big idea. . . . He perceives the true nature of credit in an economic whole. . . . The Douglas Scheme is a splendid attempt to get at the problem from the other end than the usual. It is quite feasible to co-relate demand power with products, and prices with consumption. It is quite practicable to finance new production through a Producers' Bank in an organised economic whole. Everyone should study the proposals."

There! How's that for an Assayer's Certificate to go into our mining prospectus! It should get us in a little more capital and enable us to cut our way an inch or so nearer the inexhaustible lode of the nation's Real Credit.

"Soviet newspapers refuse to believe that the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and the Standard Oil Company of New York are at variance in matters of oil policy. They state that the companies obey a single command, and that the New Jersey company has 'the job of squealing for £16,000,000 compensation in connection with Russian oil shares, which they unluckily acquired from the firm of Nobel, while the Standard Oil Company of New York signs profitable contracts by which they aim at driving out the Anglo-Persian group from the Near and Middle East markets.'—*Daily Express*, July 26, 1927.

"Despite the break in diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union, there is persistent talk here of a renewed drive to bring about recognition by this Government of the Soviet régime. Most of its inspiration is derived from certain oil interests who are ready to take a chance on tempting concession offers from Russia. It was stated here the other day that in the event of war between Poland and the Soviets, the United States would be obliged, in order to protect newly-created interests of its citizens in Russia, to extend some sort of recognition."—*The New York Correspondent of The Statist*, July 2, 1927.

"It is possible that the Bank Rate may be raised again. Yet there is no real stringency of money. There is only a fear that money may become tighter because the Bank of England has had to part with over two millions in gold, in addition to setting aside half a million more for South Africa—where the gold comes from. How absurd it all is! Just because a comparatively small demand is made upon our superabundant gold supply the Government has to pay a higher rate of interest for the temporary use of idle money held by the banks, such money not being gold at all, but merely bank credit."—J. T. D., in *The Shoe and Leather Record*, May 27, 1927.

"The re-establishment of the gold standard and the 6 per cent. increase in rail rates had more than nullified the advantages to the coal trade of such reduction in wages and increase in working hours as had been given. Failing either lower wages or increased output, I believe the only remedy for our industrial depression is to abandon the gold standard. By this means we might maintain high wages through the depreciation of the £1, and through the rates of exchange falling against us enable the dollar, the franc, the mark and the lira to purchase more of our goods. . . . The country has not been so much distressed and poverty in our history for a hundred years past as there is now."—Sir George B. Hunter, Chairman of Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson, reported in *The Journal of Commerce*, June 30, 1927.

Current Political Economy.

Unreal as the frontage of a General Election is, in view of the very small influence over subsequent Government conduct the result exercises, it is during the preparations for such an event that the stock of ideas held by the people's leaders are disseminated. The stock of ideas just released by the Labour Party makes one pray for the people and despair of the Labour Party. In preparation for the General Election of late 1928 or early 1929, the October Conference of the Labour Party will be asked to agree to the formulation of "a programme of legislation . . . for a Labour Government." Before the Labour Party Conference has had a chance to give its views, however, the main proposals have been thrown to the Liberal and Tory intelligentsia for criticism. As a result, not only is the bankruptcy of the Labour Party in the fund of ideas manifest, but the more extreme bankruptcy of the other two parties. So far from reaching a possible programme for restoring order in England, not one of the three political parties has reached an attitude of mind in which a programme can be looked for. Reading the views of the publicity and thought departments of the rivals for political government in the greatest Empire the world, *etc.*, one feels like a stray at a Hyde Park meeting, where the controversies of forty years ago, re-fought with the same words on both sides, make one rub one's eyes and think of Rip van Winkle.

The proposal of the Labour Party which has created the stir is a surtax amounting on the average to two shillings in the pound on unearned incomes in excess of £500, together with an increase in the death duties. The former tax is expected to realise £85,000,000, and the latter £15,000,000, the total of £100,000,000 to be used for debt redemption and the abolition of food taxes. Lengthy criticism of the proposed policy is hardly necessary. What is of more immediate moment is the help rendered to the Labour Party by the criticisms of their educational superiors, the efforts to deflect the Labour Party's thought and numbers into channels of more profit for the well-being of the country they look forward to managing. The critic who shows the nearest to a sign of hope is Mr. Brailsford, in the *New Leader*, although he seems to hesitate on the top of the hedge between socialist and social credit implications. After complaining justly that such a policy as proposed by the Labour Party limits the amount available for social improvement by earmarking for two minor purposes all the increase in taxation that Labour dare impose, Mr. Brailsford says that "the problem of problems is to release the latent powers of the machines that work half-time, to draw from the soil its unharvested capacities—to find for a million unemployed productive work." Obviously Mr. Brailsford is not quite sure whether it is the product he wants for the people, or the work. As a consequence he can neither search for a scheme of distribution that will stimulate production to capacity, nor content himself with a fight against the rest of society about the fraction of capacity production already put out. His own policy—of family allowances and a minimum wage for all—across which the heavy debt redistributing the common inheritance without developing it. Both his own suggestions and the Labour Party's are made before a psychological background on which the quantity of purchasing power and the quantity of goods are regarded as equal and fixed.

The line adopted by the *Nation* and *Athenaeum* is the diplomatic. It gently takes the Labour Party's hand and then raps its knuckles because

its arithmetic is wrong. "It is seriously discreditable to the Labour Party," says the *Nation*, "that it should encourage palpable illusions as to the benefits to be expected from a stiff, but, as we should agree, a not unbearably stiff tax." Having marked the Labour Party's sums wrong and failed to see the appropriateness of this substitute for the capital levy, the *Nation* abandons the subject, having contributed less than Mr. Brailsford. Both stand committed to a position which experience shows to be a stalemate. Both have no alternative, while money incomes fall, to pay off the national debt in terms of a rising monetary unit.

The *Times* and the *Spectator* criticise the proposals in terms in which the solid English mind confirms at leisure the view expressed in haste. "The organism of unknown complexity and of exquisite delicacy called capitalism depends on two principles," says the *Times*, "it depends on saving, and it depends on credit." What questions are provoked by statements of such naiveté at this. Where in the system of Capitalism is there "unknown complexity" except in finance? What has the *Times* done to assist Mr. McKenna or others even more disinterested to probe that unknown complexity? Has the *Times* ever considered whether there is in the credit mechanism a device by which savings could be rendered vastly less important than they were when the *Times* learned economics? All this talk of "thrift," the robbery of the thrifty man's wife and family, and the twenty other clichés, calls back Rip van Winkle and Hyde Park.

Neither the *Times* nor the *Spectator* appears to be acquainted with a text-book on finance, banking, or credit. Their writers ignore for the purpose of their leaders all economics later than 1890. "The power of capital and labour working together," says the *Times*, "is limited by the command of man over matter." The impressiveness of this departs like the wind from a pricked balloon when it is recollects that Professor Soddy is by no means alone in begging finance to get out of the way of man's command over matter, already vastly in excess of man's social ability to use it. The *Spectator* insults the reader still more impudently. "A distinction between income which comes from owning, and income which comes from working is really illusory," it says, in bland pretended ignorance of such a distinction in every Finance Act for years. No wonder that the Labour Party cleaves to its policy when its critics show themselves so incompetent.

The foregoing are only a few of the possible examples which show that economics are still discussed in practically every medium of publicity in terms of capital and labour and minus the important term of credit. Mr. Baldwin returned from Canada last week to announce that he had not noticed any considerable capital and labour problem there. Obviously he had not been looking for any other problem, such as a financial one. In the absence of the capital-labour problem he must have blinked to find that prosperity was not quite what is promised here in return for its settlement. N.

THE WORLD IMPRODIGAL.

[Sir George Paish on Danger to World Credit: "Never had the world been so deeply in debt."—*Times*, August 4, 1927.]

The world's in debt. I s'pose the world began it
By borrowing money from another planet?
The world's in debt. I ignorantly said, "It
Appears the world might give the world some credit."
L. S. M.

Views and Reviews.

NOTES ON MECHANISM.—III.

(Concluded.)

Traditionally responsibility has been assumed during the growth of Christian civilisation. The individual has been held responsible, even against the plea of ignorance, for example, in his offences against society such as breaches of law. Proof of incapacity for responsibility has entailed exemption from the legal consequences in criminal cases, although it has entailed segregation from society. Much of the subtlety of English law resides in the collected experience and statutes in which responsibility is established as among principal, agent, and servant. But this responsibility has not developed positively as implied by Christianity. In the extension of Christian civilisation no coherent statement has been produced of the relations between man and men *on earth*, such as even the earlier thought of Plato and Aristotle promised to fertilise. There is, in short, no teleology of man for this life. Even sociology is divided into two branches, one purely cognitive and determinist in which the scientist has no duty but to collect statistics and let them reflect what they will, and the other entirely of free-will and feeling in which the propagandist reigns. That some men try to be in both at once, while involving them in contradictions, at least offers hope of reconciliation.

It was inevitable, as the power of observing the complexity of the interworking between individual and environment expanded as the result of biological and psychological discoveries, that the question of freedom versus determination should become an issue. It was not necessary, however, that the issue should continue an unbridgeable gulf on which every philosopher comes to grief. The concept of responsibility, once it became the affirmation, would put the antitheses into the unconscious, rendering them in consequence no longer a philosophical dilemma. For life's sake, for the sake, that is, of breeding more cultured, more social, more representative individuals, and of fulfilling the dreams conceived in beautiful states of the soul by such as Nietzsche, the responsibility of the individual needs not only to be cherished but intensified, and made positive. It is even probable that the acceptance of determinism is more psychologically than philosophically governed; because circumstances are for the moment stronger than his will a person obtains by the determinist attitude a temporary respite from exercising his will futilely. Determinism may be a device for obtaining a rest from taking charge of the universe.

The dilemma of determinism versus free-will has now in practice become the dilemma of responsibility versus its negation. While economic and political life has become mechanised social life has become anarchic. Now that every man, woman, and child is economically and politically organised by machinery, hopelessly overwhelmed by a system, they insist more and more in social life on "the right of self-expression." Public sympathy goes out to the man or woman who deserts wife, family, and friends "to live his (or her) own life," while the man who refuses to be the fodder of a system is regarded as a rogue, the deeper respect for him being repressed. What a travesty of free-will and philosophic conflict—slavery in the civilised superstructure against impulse and waste in the basic foundations of life.

The organic—and, therefore, responsible—conception of society must be reborn or Western civilisation must perish. Only the concept of responsibility can assist. If there is a region in the world where the controversy of organism versus mechanism is appropriate, it is America, whose literature confirms the guess. America has received a push which may bear it along a considerable distance without a definite resumption of will. Europe, however, is sick and breaking up. No doctor ever preached determinism to a patient in danger of demoralisation. The individual-psychology of Adler is a true sign of the times. His emphasis on the necessity for re-education to set the individual in pursuit only of worthy aims is a technique built on a foundation of social responsibility. For Adler the conflict between mechanism and freedom does not exist, since they are united in the concept of happiness attainable by acceptance of one's place in organic society. Indeed, determinism versus free-will is the philosophic reflex of the slavery versus ambition falsehood which has fitted Europe to be Adler's patient.

What psycho-analysis has revealed concerning submerged psychic-processes does not diminish responsibility. There was an excuse for false motive before, perhaps, and there shall be forgiveness. But now, arising out of the privilege of greater self-knowledge, there is a new duty, the duty to keep one's true motives and actions in accord. Such is a fair paraphrase of an essay published in "Psychology and the Church," and it expresses a common-sense attitude to the question. However determined as cause and effect the workings of the mind and their outcome in action may be it is impossible to deny that something unique in man is actually *freed* by the greater demonstration of the cause and effect relationship. Apart from the self-imposed bond implied in responsibility, however, the freedom is meaningless.

All empirically philosophical efforts to plumb either determinism or free-will lead to acceptance of one or the other in a state of fatigue. As long as they remain quests for *truth* and not quests for *truth insofar as valuable for life* they are infinite and profitless quests, leading to more and more pronounced spiritual self-division. We cannot satisfactorily live two lives, one in which determinism is assumed, the other in which free-will is assumed. In a hundred decisions a day where feeling in the form of inclination has to be shut off from several directions in order that action may be taken in one we tacitly accept freedom. In matters of science and technique we as tacitly accept determinism or absolute causation. We have not as yet found any way for dispensing with either.

There can apparently be no satisfactory philosophy, as long as creation or evolution continues, which does not regard the individual as a vehicle for some unique catalyst. When the behaviourist measures he may rely on determinism; but when he interferes, performs some operation or bestows suggestion or advice, determinism is no longer sufficient. It is not then the subject's will alone, it is the operator's will which is in question. The operator for the moment is *creator*, the subject being a manifestation of chaos. For the remainder of the subject's life it may well appear that he is sane because a knife removed the bone that pressed on his brain; traces of the work of the knife remain, of the wielder of the knife none. There is no known occasion where order proceeds out of disorder mechanically. It looks so *afterwards*, but if one can be present while the order is produced one finds a creative will present also.

R. M.

The Prophets.

III.—THE COCKTAIL SCHOOL.

By Hugh Ross.

Shaw and Galsworthy are prophets of the age, but not representatives of it. They bewail the sins of Babylon, but the Babylonians have their own playwrights—the Cocktail School—led by Coward and Lonsdale. First let it be said, however, that Coward has written one play, "Hay Fever," and Lonsdale, one act, the first of "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney," that are gems of artificial comedy. Coward, at any rate, never has done and probably never will do anything to equal it in its spontaneous gaiety and brilliant wit. Lonsdale may surpass himself. But both have at least a claim on the gratitude of their contemporaries for these achievements.

It would be idle to enter into a discussion of the ethical code which governs artificial comedy. Charles Lamb has already done it. It is not, in the present instance, of vast importance. Nobody, except those so completely lacking a sense of humour that they sit on Public Morality Control Boards, would dream of judging "Fallen Angels" by the moral standards which are applied to life. (The trouble about "Fallen Angels" was not that it was disgusting but that it was dull. It ought to have been censored, but not for the reason that the protesting lady wished.) What is important is that the Coward attitude to life is symptomatic.

The Cocktail School is the lineal descendant of Wilde, the wit. But it is immeasurably inferior to its master. For Wilde, in spite of his personal reputation, never wrote an indecent line. His wit is clean and invigorating. But his heirs cannot achieve that. They rely for their effect on an entirely different type of appeal.

"Since Sir John has taken to attending the debates regularly, which he never used to do in the good old days, his language has become quite impossible. He always seems to think that he is addressing the House, and consequently whenever he discusses the state of the agricultural labourer, or the Welsh Church, or something quite improper of that kind, I am obliged to send all the servants out of the room. It is not pleasant to see one's own butler, who has been with one for twenty-three years, actually blushing at the sideboard. I assure you my life will be quite ruined unless they send John at once to the Upper House."

That is the Wilde effect.
"Being Lady Elton would have certain advantages."

"Heavens! Think of waking up in the morning and finding Elton alongside of one."

"One wouldn't."

That is what his disciples have made of it. Having agreed to waive the moral standards of life when judging the work of the Cocktail School, can we not allow the writers to be as immoral as they wish?

If the line is to be drawn anywhere, can it not be drawn at the only place where it is deserved—not where the censor canonises the play by banning it, but where the public kills it by refusing to feed the box-office?

Coward and Lonsdale, and even, at times, Arlen, have amused us by introducing us to an artificial world. Let us not be so unbalanced as to crush the bubbles of their wit with the hammers of morality.

Up to a point this attitude is sound. It is exactly the attitude in which to approach, for instance, "The Importance of Being Earnest."

But it is not the attitude in which to approach "Easy Virtue."

What invalidates it is the writer's own attitude.

At heart, Coward and Lonsdale are arrant sentimentalists. They want all the time to have their cake and eat it. They agree wholeheartedly that

their work is artificial comedy, and consequently must be judged by its own peculiar canons. Then, having lulled the public and the critics into quiescent acceptance of this, they themselves break all the rules and make the plays an excuse for sentimental propaganda. "Easy Virtue" is this and nothing more. A young lady marries into an English family but cannot enter into English family life. Instead of playing tennis she spends her morning lying on the sofa reading "Sodom and Gomorrah." In the second act she is given by her creator an effective emotional scene in which she succeeds in convincing the audience that she is really a much-wronged woman and in every way superior to the players of tennis. Throughout the play she is given an incalculable advantage in that all her adversaries but one are manifest burlesques. But she herself is carefully drawn. She certainly has a case, as shown in the play. But were the surrounding characters drawn with equal skill, she would have no case at all. It is exactly this type of artistic dishonesty that vitiates all the work of this school. Into an artificial atmosphere is introduced a credible person, who, by contrast with the puppets around, has some redeeming points. These are stressed, and a creature too futile and negligible even to be a villain becomes a much-wronged heroine. To-day we laugh at the sentimental treatment which produced "La Dame aux Camélias," that schoolboy's apotheosis of adultery. We laugh at the schoolboy mentality which applauds it and enjoys it. We are all cynics now. But the demand is as great as ever. Coward, realising this, has merely given a twist to situations and, to suit our change of viewpoint, assumed a cynicism to make the sentimentalism palatable.

He has even invaded that last stronghold of the sentimentalists, Ruritania. Ruritania was rapidly getting out of date when he turned his attention to it and showed that it could still be made a profitable territory if its denizens made epigrams instead of making love, and calmly strolled off to enjoy one night of misbehaviour in a room whose doors open on the stage.

There is another aspect of the plays to be considered. I have called most of the characters artificial. As stage characters they are, because they are usually merely mouthpieces for the author's epigrams. But, in another sense, they are not by any means as artificial as some people suppose. Many earnest Yorkshiremen have said to me, in reference to some of the characters in "Spring Cleaning" and "The Vortex," "But there aren't any people like that." One has, reluctantly, to admit that there are. The most reposterous remarks and mannerisms attributed to them on the stage are mild compared with those of their prototypes in life. Moreover, they form a large and influential section of the "artistic world." They have, through their various coteries, an enormous influence on the development of the theatre. It is, fortunately, an influence which would not be tolerated by the majority, were it recognised. The average man even, the average artist certainly, have a healthy contempt of the pseudo-artistic cliques which chatter in drawing-rooms and are free of theatre dressing-rooms.

But, as they are portrayed on the stage, he can laugh at them. Seeing them artificial, he can even laugh with them, finding thus a vicarious indulgence of a wit which he does not possess. And it is only a short step from enjoying their company behind the footlights to tolerating it in the stalls.

This, then, is the danger of the Cocktail School. Screening itself behind the name of artificial comedy, it claims immunity from certain lines of criticism. These claims conceded, it abuses them by introducing one or two figures, manifestly not artificial, whom it treats sympathetically, and offers to

the audience for a favourable judgment on precisely those moral lines which it has, in other cases, rejected. The secondary danger is that by familiarising the public with certain types of degeneracy—again under cover of "artificial comedy"—it will blunt its perception of the incalculable harm which these people, either by direct or indirect influence, do to the cause of the theatre. Hearty laughter casteth out fear.

A measure of the success is due, of course, not to the subject matter but to the extraordinary technical projection of the plays. Coward, as an actor, knows from experience how to get the required stage effects, and his later plays all witness to his mastery. So do those of Lonsdale—the end of the first act of "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney," being a model for "dramatic surprise." Other writers of the school forget that when you have nothing to say, it matters everything how you say it. The dreary fatuity of Arlen's "The Green Hat" on the stage is a case in point. What success it had was due to the reputation of the book. Its ultimate failure was a welcome indication that there are limits to public endurance. William Gerhardt who, by virtue of "Perfectly Scandalous," must be accounted the newest recruit to the school, has combined tedious suggestiveness with bad technique to an extent quite unprecedented. Indeed, the future development of the best qualities of the playwrights seems to be in the hands of Ashley Dukes who, to the great relief of his admirers, has forgotten the sound of drums and, to the sound of lyres and flutes, has wended his way to "One more river." Mr. Dukes, being the son of a Nonconformist minister, may be able so to temper his wit with decency that the school may be saved from the ignominy (artistic and otherwise) of another Late Restoration period, and a very valuable contribution saved for the enrichment of drama.

But, of course, there is always the unanswerable answer that all the best limericks are unprintable.

Drama.

Love at Second Sight: Royalty.

No doubt Mr. Miles Malleon took the dramatisation of a novel, "Safety First," by Margot Neville, as a light relaxation from social conflicts whose dramatisation he has taken in such earnest. Without the novel, it is impossible to say how much is Mr. Malleon and how much the novelist, but it is just to say that the work of Mr. Malleon as producer on this occasion is superior to the combined work of novelist and dramatist. The play consists of two plaits, none too well interwoven. One of them is a somewhat French farce about a doctor dependent on his aunt for funds, who bungles everything he undertakes, even to losing the ring on which her luck depends. The farce is extracted from the devices of Hugh Raine, the doctor, and his friend employ him until his account was too far overdrawn, and who had apparently taken the ring, in all the innocence employed by mistresses, under the impression that it was bought for her.

The other theme is more in Mr. Malleon's key. Weary of the idler's futility, a gentleman of sorrow and acquainted with sin goes to sit in Hyde Park to think things over and pity himself. There he meets what every man has at some time watched and prayed for, namely, his purer half in the form of a young woman, lovely, chaste, and penniless, who understands one at first sight, speaks first, and arouses the heroism and chivalry that mundanity represses; and who comes home to lunch, to listen charmingly while one talks about one's self. From this part of the play Mr. Malleon was not quite able to dismiss the social conflict. Once or twice, in the park and afterwards, a shower threatened of the

obiter dicta in which the very rich and the very poor describe one another's offensiveness in the sight of Heaven, but it blew away when the two found something in common—that both belonged to the deserving section of their respective classes, so that their ultimate marriage was truly eugenic.

The quarrel which occurred on their return from the registry office ought to have had a better cause. Mr. Malleon shares a flair with Mr. W. W. Jacobs for suggesting dream women; pure soul images, transparent, truthful, purified rather than innocent, and, greatest of all, intelligent. He had no business to let her write that article to the *Star* describing her meeting with the parasitical tailor's dummy in the park in terms enabling identification, unless the pair were to revive their fortunes at the editor's expense by a libel action. That blot on the picture gave Phyllis Titmuss, who played the girl with understanding, a contradictory and at that stage impossible task. James Whale gave another of those rich manservants who put more into laconicisms than many actors into speeches. George Relph as Raine's friend, Lilian Lane as Angèle, and Alice O'Day as the aunt merely provide the farcical setting for the love affair of Phyllis Titmuss and Dennis Eadie as Raine. It is Dennis Eadie's show. With almost anyone else it would become earnest and sentimental; with Dennis Eadie's supremely easy, finished mastery of comedy-farce on the stage almost throughout, criticism of the play's weakness is almost disarmed.

Fresh Fruit: Court.

The curtain of this farcical comedy, adapted from the French of Régis Gignoux and Jacques Théry by John Leslie Frith, rises on Claire de Beauchamp lying on her couch while her masseur helps her to pretend illness, a matter on which professionals and quacks with patients who have money appear to agree. Claire de Beauchamp, however, had no money; but she had prospects, having been knocked down by the motor-car of the fabulously rich English Viscount Steeple, then staying in Deauville. As she explains to her friend, who is also on the game, her despair of keeping a man for longer than a week-end—and no self-respecting *femme de joie* stoops to week-ends—she had thrown herself in front of the motor-car as a sure way of getting an introduction.

When Viscount Steeple arrives with a bunch of flowers and his sympathy he shows himself a typical English aristocrat *à la français*; he is rather lower middle-class than the average City clerk, and without an idea in his head, the whole of whose equipment for viscountancy is one platitude, to wit, a theory of education. He ought surely to have been Minister of Education, when he would have been saved the necessity of asking the woman's age point-blank; he could have requested her kindly to be good enough to fill up the enclosed form. Claire, with an eye on the half-blind viscount's millions and a sure knowledge of the nearest she could get to the wishes of a doddering old man, answered thirty, and would have carried it off but for the unexpected arrival of her film-star daughter of twenty-two from Paris immediately after she had given the child's age as thirteen.

Mother and daughter are apparently not merely ready to call a truce where getting a man is in question. They make an alliance. Geneviève put away her cigarettes, blasphemies, and cocktails, except when she could sneak them, and dressed herself up as thirteen; she played with toys and took scoldings and spankings in the sacred cause of her mother's marriage. It had to come out in the end, of course, after the viscount's nephew had fallen in love with Geneviève and made himself maudlin drunk, to talk of suicide after the fashion of *Le Rire*. The play is French nonsense, in parts very amusing

nonsense. It requires to be played more brightly and a little faster. Mr. John Leslie Frith, as the viscount's nephew, acted much of the time as though it were tragedy. D. A. Clarke-Smith as the film star fiancé of Geneviève, who came blundering down from Paris at inopportune moments, only to have his nose put out in the end, found the right temper and tempo; Helen Haye as Claire, and the delightful Morton Selten as the viscount, together with D. A. Clarke-Smith, carried the play on their backs. Whenever Morton Selten was on the stage the humour was rich. Marian Wilson's Geneviève had a crudeness for which the producer must be held responsible. This actress has talent and vitality. In some scenes, particularly in her refusal to go on farther with the child masquerade, on the ground that a month in quod was better than being a kid again, she was convincing; but she certainly did not render even a "farce" child of thirteen. She spoke and behaved like an overgrown booby of eight or nine, for which age surely most of the toys were meant.

The One-Eyed Herring: Wyndham's.

Let nobody complain that this play by Sir Frank Popham Young is slow. It is so rapid, so full of incident, so packed with mysteries, that at the end one feels as though one had been hustled off one's feet. As yet, detective plays are incomplete. Edgar Wallace, for example, throws clues on everybody's trail except the one person the audience is there to spot. Sir Frank Popham Young has completed them. In this play everybody is a detective, and everybody a criminal, with a marvellous power of sudden metamorphosis between the two. If the other institution detective plays still require, namely, bookmakers to receive bets between the acts, lowering the odds at the end of the second one, both bookies and Government would have been in pocket at the end of this play.

Although a murder has taken place before the play opens, and another takes place in the second act, there is not the customary horror of such occurrences. There are thrills, but the audience is kept too busy remembering who the various people are and calculating the odds on their being the criminal all the characters are looking for. It is next to impossible to guess why any action in the play, let alone the murders, is done. Servants show their secret service credentials to one another with guileless confidence and inconsequence. Scotland Yard, the United States secret police, and Heaven knows what other detective agencies, tumble over one another in heaps.

The author has gone to work to produce a farcical satire on the incoherence of detective plays in general, and if only the criminal had finally escaped he would have succeeded without qualification. Is it too late to simplify the last act somewhat, making the events in it a little less overwhelming, even at the expense of letting the fox escape? Farcical satire of detective plays is not an easy medium, since it is difficult to avoid the real thing; it is so liable to appear as though the nonsense is unconscious, especially with English actors and actresses. This play is as near to success in the medium as anything produced for some years, and its cast is largely appropriate. Clive Currie and Connie Ediss, as the American herring-canners, who have bought Castle Swilly, in Scotland, and combined the trade with a rum business, are so fine that they make one suspect for a time a satire on America. But the presence of English aristocratic scions with false names, French maids with doubtful intentions, German and Italian counts with questionable beards re-assures one that the author was subtly laughing at the universal interest in mystery plays.

PAUL BANKS.

Pastiche.

AFTERTHOUGHTS.

The American citizen looked worried.

"Are you feeling quite well, dear?" enquired his wife.

"Quite well, thank you," he replied in equally perfect English, for both of them belonged to the most cultivated section of American society. In a word, they were natives of Boston.

"Perhaps you are worried about business," she continued.

"No, business is all right."

"Then there has been some impurity going on."

"Not in this city."

"Still, you are worried about something. What is it? Blasphemy?"

"There has been a fellow blaspheming. He said he didn't believe the serpent tempted Eve—said he didn't see how it could talk with a forked tongue. But we are dealing with him. He is going to be discharged from his job."

"Has there been anything else to worry you."

"Well, yes. There's a lot of champagne being drunk in this town. It'll be hell for the degenerates when we catch them."

The lady was relieved. "I thought," she said, "you might have been worrying about Sacco and Vanzetti."

"That? Why, they only got what they deserved."

"I know, dear. Only I thought perhaps you might have been paying attention to what that girl said, about the trial, you know, and their having been kept waiting so long before they were electrocuted."

"Whose fault was that? It would all have been over fast enough if they hadn't defended themselves."

"Talking of Tessa," remarked his wife, "what are we going to do about her. We can't take her back. We can't have a hired girl in the house after she has been arrested by the police for going on about injustice in public. Such a pretty girl, too. Why she wanted to bother about such things I can't imagine."

"Mad," observed her husband. He added: "But I don't think we need discuss the question of having her back. The psychopaths have got her under observation."

"Yes, but afterwards, supposing they find that she is normal."

"Afterwards? My dear, it's no use looking years ahead."

C. HAYWARD.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

"RATIO" OR "STANDARD."

Dear Sir,—I am interested in Mr. Evers's letter in THE NEW AGE of August 25, and will endeavour to deal with the point that he raises in a short article in the course of a few weeks.

The most important aspect of the question, however, is its relation to a habit of mind.

The civilisation in which we are living is based on the idea that it is possible to erect rigid standards like the centimetre or the gramme in regard to values, and human qualities, and actions. William Blake, whose centenary has just been celebrated, picks out this idea perfectly in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," in the proverb that "one law for the lion and the ox is oppression." The new civilisation, if there is one, will be founded on the idea which can be epitomised in the homely saying that "circumstances alter cases."

C. H. DOUGLAS.

SHAW AND STRINDBERG.

Sir.—The conjunction of two such significant playwrights as August Strindberg and Bernard Shaw in one programme has not apparently provoked as much reflection as might have been expected. The fact that the Shaw portion of the programme at the Everyman Theatre is merely the curtain-raiser and of no very particular dramatic importance, whereas the performance of the Strindberg play is clearly a first-class event in modern drama, has led rather naturally to an almost total eclipse of Shaw by Strindberg in the comments of the critics. Yet neither this nor even the contrast between comedy and tragedy can obliterate the close relationship of their ideas. Both of them deal with the alleged initiative of woman in the relation of the sexes. Had the length of time available in one evening permitted "The Father" to be preceded by "Man and Superman" instead of by "Over-ruled," we should have found more people jumping at the continuity of idea. The "pursuit" of man by woman, in Shaw, and his comparative helplessness against it, has become in Strindberg the relentless destruction of the man when the woman's life-aims find him superfluous. And if, in Shaw, both John and Anne are the unconscious media of the Life Force, in Strindberg's play that Force may be said to have at least begun to be consciously individualised. If this is so, it means that Strindberg is the more "modern" of the two, in that he writes of a more fully developed consciousness in men and women. But that is by the way.

If Mr. Shaw in his comedy says that despite the conventions and pretences it is really woman who takes the initiative in love (as apparently she did quite openly in earlier days), Strindberg simply shows us in one particular instance how the comedic courting and wooing have been left behind by the whirligig of time, so that the outcome of twenty years of continued feminine domination, in marriage, gives us the tragedy of "The Father." The way in which the wife, devoid of all restraining scruples, and aided by all the other women in the house, compasses the destruction of her husband, is, logically, at one with the conduct of Anne with Straker, despite the dramatic change from comedy to tragedy. Strindberg seems to say that a woman's will, being reinforced by Nature (or if you like, by the Life Force!) and unhindered by morality, by scruples or doubts, will triumph over the man's in any conflict between them, if he chances to be so civilised as to allow doubts and scruples to weaken the unity of his being. In "Over-ruled" it is those doubts and scruples in the two men, and the relative freedom from them of the two women of the play, which link even that comparative trifle with Strindberg's drama. The four people are each and all enjoying themselves with the other person's willing spouse. But whereas the women treat it all pretty realistically and with out scruples, the men are full of silly protestations and more or less conscientious self-condemnation. The women, full of sense, tell them to stop "fooling." In such a situation, it is implied, women are more clear-eyed than men, and are not going to lose sight of the wood for the trees, nor make themselves miserable with hectic consciences that have no true touch with reality.

There is, really, of course, not the least need to assume that a woman's will is necessarily one whit stronger than a man's, but certainly a will untroubled by scruples or doubts, be it a man's or a woman's, must always be stronger than one that is split and diffused by self-division, by the restraints of doubt or of conflicting reasons. Adolph in "The Father," was strong enough until his mind was invaded by doubt, the doubt about his own sanity and the doubt about the paternity of his daughter.

In "Over-ruled," commonsense and reason happen to go hand in hand with the singleness of outlook of the women, against the moralistic reasonings of the men. The men therefore are—"over-ruled"! In "The Father," the self-questionings of the man are faced with a similar singleness of outlook, and again the man is for years over-ruled, and, finally, destroyed.

Perhaps both Shaw and Strindberg are putting their fingers on one of the diseases of modern civilisation—doubt; on the weakness of those individuals who have advanced from the "wholeness" or inner oneness of those in whom the great instincts of Nature still dominate the inner life and have arrived at the stage of doubt, morality, and inner conflict, the stage of analysis and self-torment. In order to recover their native strength and health they need to pass on to the stage of re-integration, where they recover their wholeness on a higher level of the spiral, in a new synthesis. There will then be no question as to the strength of their wills. On that level it is likely that they will have abandoned as illusory an idea that their immortality is going to depend upon the magic of parentage, or upon the extent to which their will is dominant in the training of their child, or, for

that matter, upon the extent to which their will is or is not dominant over that of any other, be it husband or wife, or any one else.

STEPHEN W. SMITH.

A CRITICAL COINCIDENCE.

Sir,—My letter in your issue of August 4, if it had been written at all, would certainly have been limited to simply registering an interesting coincidence had not the Editor of the *Scots Observer* refused to publish a letter which was so limited—not, however, on the grounds that he had received Mr. Middleton Murry's article on July 1, but on very different grounds. What the Editor of the *Scots Observer* wrote to me was that he did not consider the articles so similar as I made out, but he admitted one salient similarity and went on to say that that might very well have suggested to Mr. Middleton Murry the line he took. "Such things," he said, "are not unknown."

I cannot understand why he should have discussed the matter on this basis rather than simply pointed out that he had received Mr. Middleton Murry's MSS. on July 1, which would have disposed of all but "interesting coincidence." I may be "unfortunately so suspicious," although I do not think Mr. Murry is justified in coming to any such conclusion on the basis of a single letter; but in view of my corroboration on the matter with the Editor of the *Scots Observer* and his peculiar omission to point out that he had received Mr. Middleton Murry's article prior to the appearance of mine in THE NEW AGE, and the fact that he discussed the matter with me on a basis incompatible with his having done so, I consider that I was justified in writing in the manner in which I did rather than in the manner in which the letter I originally wrote to the *Scots Observer* (publication of which was refused) was couched.—Yours faithfully,

HUGH M'DIARMID.

P.S.—Needless to say, I completely accept Mr. Murry's word with regard to the matter, although it makes the conduct of the Editor of the *Scots Observer* all the more incomprehensible, and the coincidence all the more astonishing.

WILLIAM BLAKE AND ANTI-SEMITISM.

Sir,—I am obliged to R. M. for giving me his own definition of the word "anti-Semite," but I am afraid it does not advance matters greatly. It certainly does not correspond with the definition to be extracted from Jewish journals. "Anti-Semitism," according to them, is a form of insanity and ought to be certifiable. That anyone should be capable of disliking members of a race which is compacted of all the domestic virtues is in itself proof of insanity. As in the case of the mad dog of Goldsmith's "Elegy," the mere fact that the animal "bit so good a man" was proof positive that it was insane.

Of course, the Jewish "argument" is purely fictitious, but then, so is the word, and I cannot believe that any Aryan brain coined it. For the purest Semitic race on earth are the Arabs, and before the Christian Era they manifested greater antipathy to the Jews than any Aryan people have done. Thus it comes about that the purest "Semites" are also the most virulent "anti-Semites" (in the Jewish sense)—which is, of course, absurd.

As for race-hatred, as a candid correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle* wrote not long ago, the ordinary Englishman cannot hate anybody and certainly will not do it to order.

In his answer to Bishop Watson's "defence of the Bible" against Tom Paine, Blake wrote: "That God does and always did converse with honest men, Paine never denies. He only denies that God conversed with murderers and re-vengers, such as the Jews were, and, of course, he holds that the Jews conversed with their own State religion, which they called God, and so were liars, as Christ said. That the Jews assumed a right exclusively to the benefits of God will be a lasting witness against them, and the same it will be against Christians."

Jews may call this anti-Semitism, but it is the truth as Blake saw it. And it will be noted that he makes no distinction between Jews and Christians when they are associated in the same error—when the Church betrays her relationship to the Synagogue. As for hating a Jew because he is one, such a thing would be an impossibility with Blake. One of his closest friends was Henry Fuseli, who, as Blake said, was "both Turk and Jew."

JOHN HENRY CLARKE.

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