THE PLAGUE PITS (12 S. viii. 450).—J. W. G. will find some particulars as to the locale of these pits in Defoe’s ‘Journal of the Plague in 1665’; in vol. ii. of ‘Old and New London,’ by Walter Thorbury, at p. 202; in vol. iv. of the same work, at p. 249; and in Timbs’s ‘Romance of London,’ vol. x., p. 152. WILLOUGHBY MAYCOCK.

I am told that at the points of junction between the Brompton and Kensington Roads, and between Cromwell Road and Fulham Road, are green spots that have never been built on, and are said to mark the sites of plague pits. I have an impression that there were others in Bunhill Fields. Perhaps some information might be found in Timbs’s ‘Curiosities of London,’ or in other works dealing with London topography.

J. T. F.

I have always heard that a plague pit was where the curious triangle of ground is railed in opposite Tattersalls Gate in Kensington High Street, S.W., and that another was under No. 3, Belgrave Square, and another somewhere by Paddington Chapel. Has a real estimate ever been made of how many died? Of course the early burials were in the churchyards.

E. E. COPE.

The following quotation from Hughson’s ‘London,’ vol. ii., p. 191 (1805), may be of interest to J. W. G.:

When churchyards were not sufficient and large enough to bury their dead in, they [the people of England] chose certain fields appointed for that purpose.

Walter Manny purchased a piece of ground, called Spital Croft, belonging to St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, containing 13 acres and a rod in which were interred, during the next year, fifty thousand persons; and John Cory enclosed another by East Smithfield for the same purpose. Stratford, Bishop of London, dedicated both the grounds.

This is quoted from Stow’s ‘Chronicle’ as a footnote to Hughson’s very brief notice of the pestilence of 1348-49.

WALTER E. GAWTHORP.

“BEADS OF CASTLEDOWNE” (12 S. viii. 409, 453).—With reference to the meaning of the word “pair,” in the accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Andrew’s, Holborn, it is recorded that Lord Lincoln gave a pair of organs in 1485. This cannot mean two organs, nor a “series or succession of similar things,” nor is it likely that it refers to a pair of bellows. Is it not meant to convey the idea of perfection and completeness? So a string of beads may be perfect and complete.

WALTER E. GAWTHORP.

HANDSHAKING (12 S. viii. 451).—If, as Mr. J. J. Freeman’s quotation from The Rambler suggests, handshaking was a “remarkable particularity” in 1751, it does not seem to have become quite a matter of course even in 1816, when Miss Austen’s ‘Emma’ was published. On her first visit to Hartfield, Harriet Smith was “delighted with the affability with which Miss Woodhouse had treated her all the evening and actually shaken hands with her at last!”

B. B.

BANQUO (12 S. viii. 308, 354).—Scottish place-names ending with an “o” sound are by no means so rare as L. G. R. suggests. Tinto, Stobo, Elcho, Kelsoe, Balerno, Balmerino, Lesmahagow and Glasgow come to mind without research. Moreover Thurso bears no reference to an island; there is none there. It is the way we choose to write the good Norse name “Thor’s a,” i.e., Thor’s river, and appears as Thorsa, Thorsey and Thorso in early MSS.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

Heraldry: St. Augustine’s Abbey, Bristol (12 S. viii. 267, 315).—Mr. F. Were of Stoke Bishop has drawn my attention to the good stamp of the Abbey seal in Pendrick’s ‘Monastic Seals.’ It depicts St. Thomas kneeling before Our Lord, and the motto,

... ecce cruer et deitate fruor,

which might be paraphrased,

Lo! the dripping blood. I behold my God.

No one, however, has been able to trace the age of the shield of the Bristol See arms in the south chancel window of the Bristol Cathedral.

Has any reader of ‘N. & Q.’ got a copy of Lyson’s ‘Gloucestershire, Antiquities’? It illustrates the stained glass in the windows of the Cathedral choir, and if the shield were in situ in Lyson’s time it would prove that the arms were not added in 1853 when the windows were restored, though the question as to the date of this particular shield (i.e., whether pre- or post-dissolution of the Abbey) would remain unanswered, and that is my query still.

THOMAS G. SIMMONDS.

Congresbury.