

pearing in our book stores coevally with Mr. Greenblatt's work. It has an introduction by Richard Braun, described on the jacket as "a classicist and an original poet" (to differentiate him, one must presume, from unoriginal poets). In it Mr. Braun discusses the anti-epic nature of Juvenal's satires, which he describes as aiming to replace the primacy of the epic by celebrating The Heroic Age of Vice. "Epic was unreal," he says, "for it elevated a sordid reality. In an Era of Vice, where ideals are all upside-down, to rise is to be wrong, to sink is to be sane." This seems reminiscent of Mr. Greenblatt's "demonic spiral," as does Braun's discussion of Satire I, in which he refers to the descent of man through the Golden, Silver, and Iron Ages until Zeus destroys all in the Deluge and "... we have gone a long way, and have ascended to the highest reaches of nastiness."

Whether the spiral is rising to nastiness (Braun-wise) or descending into dehumanization (Greenblatt-like), the subject matter of satire seems to remain the same. For the nature of human dullness, avarice, pretentiousness does not change. It droppeth, in fact, like the gentle gook from heaven upon the satirists beneath.

But, as has been said, a man must share the action and passion of his time or be open to the charge of never having lived at all. Thus, although Juvenal's targets are timeless, his arrows are tipped with references too topical



to pink us today, even when put into modern idiom by the translator, a poet widely published in such magazines as *Accent*, *Epoch*, and *Triad*. I read as many of his verses as I could take, and they seemed ingenious, scholarly, intensely sincere—and tedious. The newly coined titles are provocative enough ("Dining with the Boss," "On Getting Married," "Your Pedigrees"), but somehow it is all too much of a muchness. For example, these lines from Satire XI, "Entertaining Friends":

Shame's ridiculed and flees. Who bids
her stay?
But now, my friend, you'll find out
how I dine,
if I preach maxims and, commending
grits,
am still a glutton who asks slaves for
whey
and make "cold vichyssoise" my under-
tone.
For having promised, you will make
your visit.

The Life Worth Living

Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler, by U. C. Knoepfelmacher (Princeton. 315 pp. \$6.50), concludes that the desperation the three authors revealed demonstrates how inadequate were their substitutions for faith. Morse Peckham teaches Victorian literature at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of "Beyond the Tragic Vision" and other books.

By MORSE PECKHAM

ONE ADMIRABLE aspect of this book is that the author takes Walter Pater seriously. In recent years George Eliot has been studied extensively and solemnly, and more than enough has been done for Samuel Butler; but Pater has yet to return to favor. Not many people today have experienced his marvelous pleasures, and even fewer have recognized the extreme toughness of his mind. Professor U. C. Knoepfelmacher has at least made a beginning, and in the right direction.

"All three began their careers by squarely rejecting the other-worldliness of the religion of their forefathers; all ended by affirming that faith alone could be a substitute for faith." So George Eliot arrived at an ethical evolutionism which was to be carried to its next stage by Zionism; Butler settled for an Evolutionary Personality who includes all human personalities, a Known God behind whom conceivably could be an Unknown God; Pater, it appears, concluded, with some melancholy, that only the sensory influence of medieval architecture and ritual could, for moderns, provide a permanence that would hold us together in the flux of experience. It is Professor Knoepfelmacher's opinion that each of these solutions is inadequate—and so they are—and that his three authors consequently revealed various kinds of desperation. George Eliot ruined *Daniel Deronda*; Butler became a fussy and sentimental old bachelor, devoted to the trivial in people and in thought; and Pater distorted Plato and ascribed strange merits to Sparta. All this makes sense and is convincing—up to a point. Yet somehow the entire book seems awry.

As everyone knows, both in the academic world and outside of it, the scholarly criticism of literature has become almost unreadable. With the best will in the world, one has to force one's way through such writing, and this book, unhappily, is no exception. The material is intrinsically interesting; the scholarship

on the whole is satisfactory, though neither striking nor mature; and the analyses are intelligent and, particularly for *Mid-dlemarch*, at times illuminating. Yet one feels that there is a difficulty beyond that of the mode in which it is written.

Professor Knoepfelmacher calls *Marius the Epicurean* Pater's "most ambitious formulation of a lifelong search for a religious creed." But this is a mistake. Pater's search was not for a religious creed but for an attitude that would perform the function of a religious creed. And this statement is just as true for Eliot and Butler. The problem for these writers and their generation was not to find a religious creed but to find something that would do the job of convincing one that life is worth the trouble it takes to live it and that man's resources are adequate to the demands life makes upon him. The real problem—which Pater saw more poignantly and toughly than the other two—was whether one can indeed hold unshakably a position that one has consciously adopted to fulfill an empirically discovered function of biological adaptation. If "faith alone can be a substitute for faith," can a consciously substitutive faith be a faith? How can a substitutive faith be protected from the skepticism which led one to adopt it? This was the real problem of George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler, and they were quite aware of it. Professor Knoepfelmacher, I believe, is not. For him, *Marius* is a mere "blueprint," but for me, he is a character of superb fictional vitality.

FRAZER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1137

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1137 will be found in the next issue.

ARD EHGTM H WHK DHFXB GK

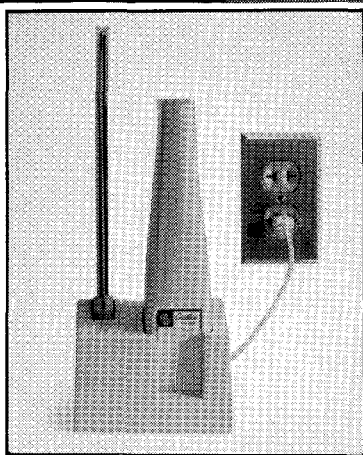
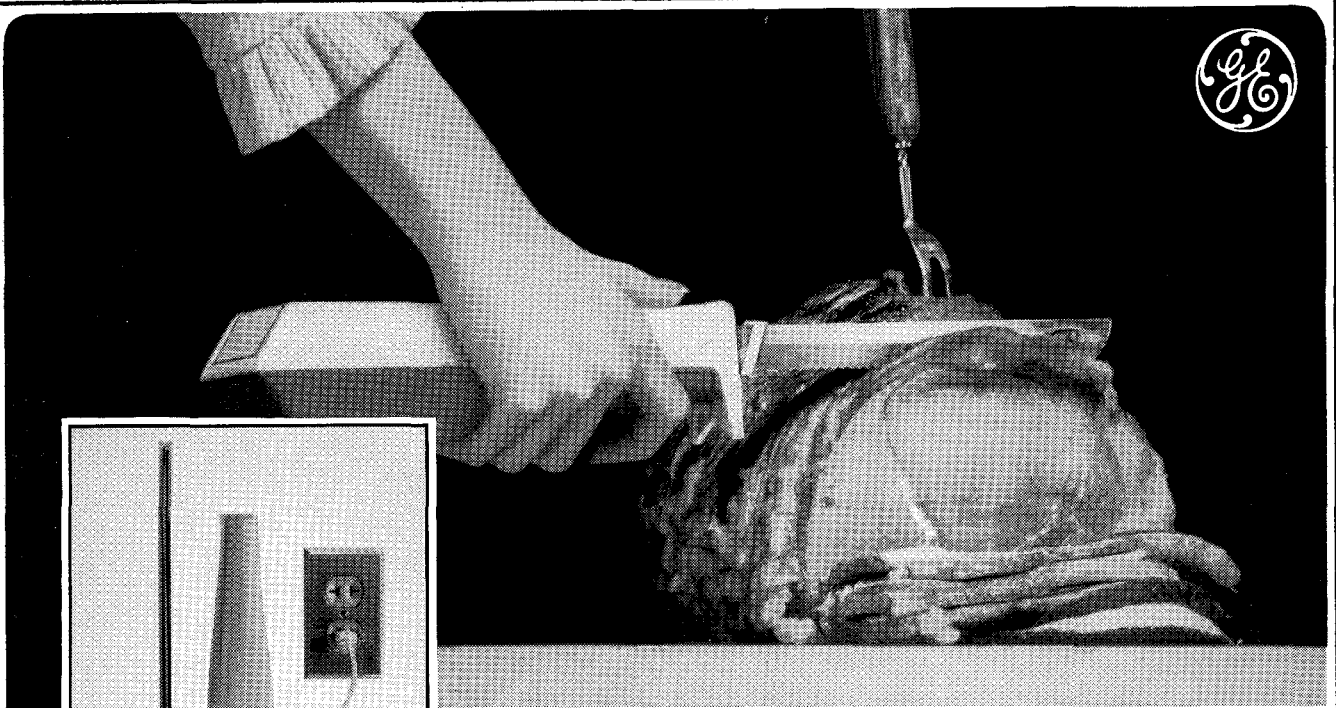
LAX WRQKGKE LR DHLIA AG-

WBXTZ FXXO RK CMGKE.

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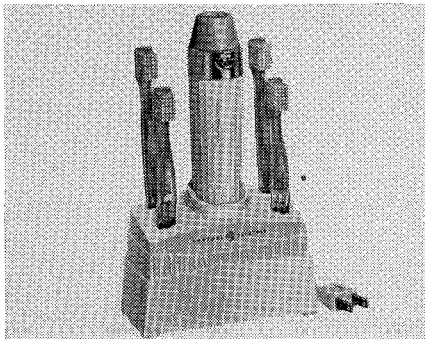
Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1136
Gossip always travels faster over
the sour grapevine. —ANONYMOUS.

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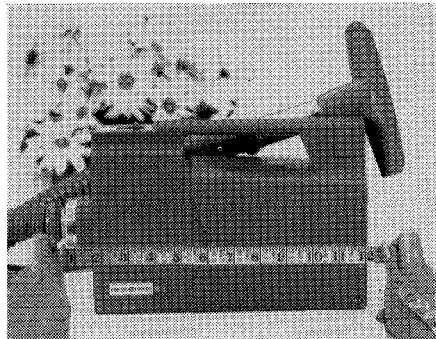


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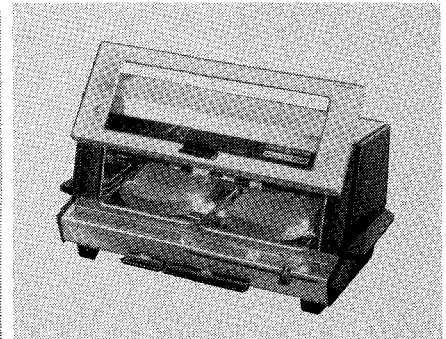
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