

[illegible]

## 25

to you, you'd pull me under, too." Diddy's desire to destroy himself has been clear to the reader from the first; indeed, the action begins not long after he has made an abortive attempt at suicide. Moreover, as Hester realizes, he subconsciously wants her to destroy him. After their confrontation, he disintegrates more and more rapidly, becoming obsessed with the memory of the (perhaps) murder in the tunnel. With Hester he returns to the scene of his crime, reenacts it, and then wanders into a vast Hall of the Dead.

The reader has many questions to ask himself when he has finished the book: what does this mean? what does that? A speculative mind can find answers to most of the questions, can usually find several conceivable answers to any one question. I am sure that Miss Sontag desired this ambiguity, that her method is based on the intimation of multiple meanings. The reader sometimes has an exasperated feeling that Miss Sontag isn't being quite fair in this game of hide-and-seek into which she has inveigled him, but he goes on playing.

What is now clear is that Miss Sontag is a writer of great talent, so gifted that one is compelled to struggle with her obscurities and ambiguities and to tolerate those perhaps unnecessary devices of which I have spoken. She has earned the right to be taken for what she is, or, rather, she has earned the right to demand of the reader to find out what she is. She has her particular feeling for life and especially death, and she has created her own ways of expressing it.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

#### FRASER YOUNG LITERARY CRYPT No. 1255

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1255 will be found in the next issue.

VDS VUVME MAQSPBS UX DIFUH

XHUF VDS AOAES OQ UPS UX

VDS FUQV QOPCIEMH VDOPCQ

OP MEE EOVSMMVIHS.

—MEXHSN PUHVD RDOVSMSN

#### Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1254

There are no amateurs, but only those who paint bad pictures.

—EDOUARD MANET.

## LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



### Intent: One Scientific System

IN SR July 15, Sir Herbert Read reviewed the first volume of my book, *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*. Unfortunately, he treated the second of its six parts (three are in the published volume) as the only important part, and consequently the whole work as concerned with esthetics, although the chapters which interest him have only an orienting function; but as a passing bow to the real intent of the book, he makes at the outset a statement which so seriously misrepresents my intent that I cannot but protest against it. He says, "... her final purpose . . . is metaphysical: she has the ambition to present a new philosophical system." Nothing could be further from my ambition, which is only to construct a conceptual framework for biological thinking that will connect its several departments, from biochemistry to neuropsychology, in one scientific system. Such work is philosophical, but does not commit one to any philosophical system, new or old; and it is certainly not metaphysical. Any metaphysical statement must apply to the world as a whole, not only to mind or even life. I have no such statement to offer.

SUSANNE K. LANGER.

New London, Conn.

### No Knight

YOUR CORRESPONDENT William Voigt, Jr., of Harrisburg, Pa. [SR, Aug. 5], refers to the author of *The Compleat Angler* as Sir Isaak Walton. *The British Dictionary of National Biography* gives no indication that Isaak was ever knighted. Perhaps Mr. Voigt was thinking of Isaak's junior contemporary Isaac Newton, who was certainly Sir Isaac.

PETER HENNIKER-HEATON.

Boston, Mass.

### History on Agenda

J. H. PLUMB'S REVIEW of the American Institute of Planners' Part I Conference proceedings, *Environment for Man—The Next Fifty Years* [SR, July 29] fails to note that this is just the first book for this two-year consultation on the future environment of a democracy. It is the aim of the consultation to begin a nationwide discussion on what we know and ought to know about the environment (past year's conference); what our values are as a society, what the foreseeable changes appear to be, and what policies and programs we propose for action (this year's conference); what further detailed, specific recommendations can be made (next year's eight to ten regional conferences).

In total, five books are being published from this consultation—two having to do with the historic aspect Mr. Plumb was looking for in his review of our first book.

The question for last year's conference was "If we had the technology and the energy, what kind of an environment would

we choose to build?" We weren't attempting to deal with politics or history. The answers at the Conference recorded the ignorance not only of science but of our awareness as a society of our values.

This year's Conference, Oct. 1-6 in Washington, and the regional conferences in 1968 get down to Mr. Plumb's complaint. It just won't all go in one book, or in one conference.

We hope to prove, through this consultation marking the professional city planners' fiftieth year, that it is as pragmatic to understand and implement according to basic values as it is to "pragmatically" go from moment to moment implementing short term projects.

Isn't that at the root of the failure of our cities?

WILLIAM R. EWALD, JR.

Washington, D. C.

### "Of" in the Arabic

RE YOUR APPEAL in SR July 15, Phillip K. Hitti in his *History of the Arabs* gives the title of Maimonides's work as *Dalalat al-Ha'irin*.

Al-Ha'irin is in the genitive plural. Hitti correctly translates the name of the work as "The Guide of the Perplexed."

JOHN MUTZIGER.

Riverdale, Md.

### Sickening

SINCE HENRI PEYRE finally decided that "to dust" Mme. Leduc's book, *Thérèse and Isabelle* [SR, July 15], "might well return," and "at fifty-nine, she might have refrained from publishing . . ." I can only ask in anger and disgust why M. Peyre did not refrain from reviewing and quoting such obscene writing and, even more important, why did you think your readers would wish to read such vile, sickening stuff?

SYBIL RAMISING.

Clinton, Conn.

TO ANSWER D. C. GRANT'S INVIDIOUS question [Letters to Book Review Editor, SR, Aug. 5], Henri Peyre reviewed Violette Leduc's *Thérèse and Isabelle* with "literary freedom," not for "pornographic license." In his responsible review, Peyre attacks the crudity of the lesbian episodes mercilessly.

Mme. Leduc is a gifted writer with a flair for rhetoric. *La Bâtarde* stands as a masterly composition. Her frankness is not necessarily a vice.

IRVING E. BENDER.

Hanover, N.H.

### Toward Understanding

WHAT IS THIS IDEA being preached about that to dissect a work of art is to ruin it [Letters to Book Review Editor, SR, Aug. 5]? To dissect is to try to understand the art that went into its creation.

JOSEPH EASTER.

New York, N.Y.