

a novel in the form of a memoir. By choosing to tell his story in the first person, Dennis has avoided some of the temptations that were too much for Cohen and Cotterell. But he is left with the delicate problem of selecting the details that will achieve the effect he wants while maintaining the tone of casual narration.

The narrator, never named, is separated from his companions when they are taken prisoner, and is isolated in a greenhouse. "Map making is my work," he says, "but the greenhouse has always been my passionate life," and for all his terror he is excited by the neglected riches he finds about him. As he eventually discovers, he is the object of a kind of jurisdictional struggle between two branches of the military; but in spite of all the threatening intrigue that goes on about him, and in spite of the miseries of a winter in which he is never warm, he is sustained by his effort to preserve the plant life with which he is surrounded.

The narrator is truly a man who cultivates his garden, in the most menacing situation imaginable, and saves both his life and his sanity by doing so. Dennis makes it all real—the narrator's recurrent and wholly justified fears, his frantic efforts to cope with the various forces that are tossing him about as if he were a shuttlecock, his sufferings from the cold, and especially his joy in life, primarily horticultural life. There are morals that may be drawn, but what I want to emphasize is the artistry with which Dennis has made a strange experience not only believable but important.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1224

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1224 will be found in the next issue.

TIKB DBIDVB ZI SIE HBXIKB

ENOSCBPT TOKDVA HBXMRTB

ENBOP KBKIPOBT MPB EII LIIZ.

—SOBEGTXNB

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1223
Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes.
—THOREAU.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Hurrah for Hersey

IN LITERARY HORIZONS [SR, Dec. 31] Granville Hicks states: "Why, there are reputable critics who believe that Marquand, Cozzens, Auchincloss, Richter, and Hersey have written the best American fiction of the past twenty-five years." Mr. Hicks and many other critics have ignored Hersey as an important, serious novelist; it is true that he does not have a defined style like Malamud or Bellow. But he can develop an emotional intensity that few others can match. His novels, taken separately, present a picture of modern life certainly more formidable than Auchincloss's, Cozzens's, Richter's or Marquand's. Perhaps—and this is only a suggestion—his stories are more important to us today than Bellow's reflective, sulking protagonists.

Agreed: his last one, *Too Far to Walk*, was not worth the trouble. Yet, a man who could write a book like *The Wall* or *A Single Pebble* does not deserve the slight he is receiving from Mr. Hicks and many other critics whom I respect.

DAVID BROMWICH.

Van Nuys, Calif.

Moral Assumptions

WHILE I AGREE WITH Irving Younger's main thesis in his review of the Reid-Inbau book on the polygraph, *Truth and Deception* [SR, Dec. 31], I cannot accept his generalizations about technology and its "moral assumptions." Some "technologists" may misapply their techniques or misinterpret the validity of the results they obtain, but they do so in their capacity as human beings; for only in that capacity can anyone make a moral judgment. . . . It would be more reasonable to criticize technologists for not making moral judgments (as with the atom bomb), but for the fact that they are seldom their own masters; when the admittedly naïve Oppenheimer tried it, the roof fell in on him. It is wiser to look to a philosophy which expects easy, black-and-white answers, and which is much more often held by political and legal persons than by engineers, than to blame technology for the abuse of the polygraph.

C. F. KERRY GAULDER.

N. Wilmington, Mass.

IRVING YOUNGER WRITES: "Falsehood plays a great and soothing role in mankind's affairs. Without it, who would like to live?" To answer Mr. Younger's question, a person with integrity vomits falsehood and *would want to live without it*. But it's true that misrepresentation is an American way of life.

YVET PUJET.

Gunnison, Colo.

MR. YOUNGER'S REVIEW EXPLAINED FULLY and well all the difficulties in the use of the polygraph. However, I would like to add

that the subject of the test can only respond to the questions according to his own knowledge or lack of it, and the test can only measure whether he believes his answers to be an accurate representation of the facts.

FAITH A. SEIDENBERG.

Syracuse, N.Y.

A Covenant with God

J. H. PLUMB STATES THAT "For Jews circumcision is a ritual, initiating entrance to the tribe, like knocking out a tooth or tattooing the body" [SR, Dec. 31]. This is not the reason for the ritual. For the Jew circumcision is the means of physically and permanently marking the Jewish male as a Jew according to Mosaic law and deriving from the covenant that Abraham made with God, Gen. 17:10-12. There is no "entrance to the tribe" as Mr. Plumb states. Regularly, a Bar-Mitzvah ceremony for boys thirteen years old marks their religious majority, at which time they become, for ceremonial purposes, adult members of the community.

ANITA SELIGSON.

Great Neck, N.Y.

Miscredited

J. H. PLUMB LISTS *In the Name of Humanity* as being written by "John Lewis." It should read "Joseph Lewis."

S. BAIL.

New York, N.Y.

Principles

I MUST AIR MY ASTONISHMENT at David McDowell's statement, in his review of John O'Hara's *Waiting for Winter* [SR, Dec. 17] that "Andrea," "a long and beautifully worked-out story about a twenty-year relationship between a man and woman, is marred by the absence of any specific motive for the woman's apparent suicide." Absence of specific motive! Andrea, as I understand her, is one of those brave young aristocrats of the Twenties, determined to live her own life, not to knuckle under to the conventions. She refuses to marry the man she says she loves—while marrying a series of others—because this is one love she doesn't want to deaden in holy deadlock. . . . The family money goes, Andrea has to work, the job is a job, nothing commensurate to her idea of herself; yet she won't sell out by marrying the man for shelter, when she wouldn't for love. And then, then, having come to him one night and found him comparing her to a Paris prostitute—well, without money, without glamour, without youth above all, what do her goings-on amount to, how do they differ from those of the sophisticated whore? Andrea knows it's time to go, and being Andrea, she goes quickly.

SOPHIE WILKINS.

New York, N.Y.

The Divine Bernhardt

Madame Sarah, by Cornelia Otis Skinner (Houghton Mifflin. 356 pp. \$6.95), pays tribute to the legendary actress with the body of a hungry sparrow and the vitality of a tigress. Philip Burton is president and director of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy.

By PHILIP BURTON

THERE are several motives which lead biographers to their choice of subject: the historian's impulse to place a great man in perspective, the iconoclast's urge to destroy a myth, the critic's feeling of a need for reappraisal, the admirer's desire to proclaim the wonders of his idol. There is no doubt that Cornelia Otis Skinner's motive is the last of these, and the result is a warm vivid, amusing, and moving account of an actress who became in her long lifetime a world phenomenon, both on and off stage. Miss Skinner, in her pell-mell enthusiasm for her subject, occasionally lapses into careless writing—"efficacy" for "efficiency," and clichés like "first saw the light of day" and "like a duck to water"—but much can be forgiven for the pleasure she communicates, which was indeed true of Bernhardt herself.

I never saw the "Divine Sarah" and I do not really regret it, because I could only have done so, as Miss Skinner did, when the famous golden voice had gone and the climax of her performance was to push herself up from her chair and stand bravely on her one remaining leg. But I do regret having seen the silent movies of the old lady, where her magic was reduced to ridiculous and badly photographed pantomime. A fairer photographic record would have been one of the faces of audiences in London, New York, Dallas, Toronto, Constantinople, Moscow, and Vienna, who were spellbound by this woman with the body of a hungry sparrow and the vitality and excitement of a tigress, even though she spoke in a language few of them could understand. It would have been kinder and more just to her memory if she had retired before either old age or the movies had claimed her. Then she would have been remembered as Siddons and Garrick are remembered, by written accounts of her extraordinary performances. *Madame Sarah* does much to restore the balance for Bernhardt, both as woman and as actress.

The woman was a fascinating complex of contradictions. She was the illegitimate daughter of a successful courtesan, who also provided her with two illegitimate half-sisters. Yet when Sarah herself became pregnant at nineteen, her scandalized mother put her out of the house. Sarah seemed to have neither the looks nor the stamina for the arduous theatrical life that became hers. She was wraith-thin, with a too-prominent nose and an unmanageable mop of red hair, and from childhood she was tuberculous. In spite of her remarkable effect upon audiences everywhere, she never ceased to suffer extreme tortures of stage-fright before going out to face the "beloved monster." Nevertheless, on several occasions, particularly in Paris, when her publicized actions had led her to expect a hostile reception, she insisted on appearing, and her defiant courage combined with her artistry turned incipient catcalls into almost hysterical displays of devotion. While her mother was Dutch and Jewish, Sarah herself was zealously and extravagantly French; the shame of the 1870-71 defeat by Germany burned deep in her, but she lived to exult in the restoration of national honor in 1919.

And what of the actress? Inevitably the comparison with Duse must arise. She was Bernhardt's junior by fifteen

years, and so was more sensitive to the winds of change in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Only the truly perceptive understood the nature of Duse's magic and welcomed her new acting style with its luminous intelligence, which was essential for the true interpretation of the modern playwrights. The theater was a means to an end for Duse, so much so that in dissatisfaction she could retire from it for eleven years at the height of her career, though she did come back to die in harness. For Bernhardt the theater was life; better a Texas tent or a London music hall than no auditorium at all. Both Bernhardt and Duse were extraordinary natural phenomena, and perhaps their different effects might be compared to experiencing Niagara Falls from the "Maid of the Mist" and experiencing the Grand Canyon while standing alone on its rim.

It is strange that Bernhardt's *The Art of the Theater* is not included in Miss Skinner's bibliography. It was the actress's deathbed gift of "advice that I should like to give beginners, especially as scarcely any was given to me." Bernhardt is often dismissed—by people who never saw her act, or saw her only when she was a crippled grotesque—as being excessively theatrical and lacking in emotional truth. To refute these accusations, here are some of her own dicta: "It is necessary to feel all the sentiments that agitate the soul of the character it is desired to represent." "I have touched real death in my different deaths." "What has been called the labor of our art can only be the quest for truth." "It is always the artist who is closest to the real in the ideal who will triumph."

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

K I N F O L K

Everybody in the second column is a brother or sister of somebody in the first column. Dennis Aig and his sister Marlene, both of Queens Village, N.Y., ask you to match the siblings up with each other and with the play or novel in which they have their being. It's all straightened out on page 48.

Catherine Earnshaw ()	1. Ben	A. <i>The Bridge of San Luis Rey</i>
Charles Hamilton ()	2. Clifford	B. <i>David Copperfield</i>
Clara Peggotty ()	3. Dan'l	C. <i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Hepzibah Pyncheon ()	4. Esteban	D. <i>An Enemy of the People</i>
Jo March ()	5. Hindley	E. <i>Gone with the Wind</i>
Manuel ()	6. Irina	F. <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i>
Olga Prozorov ()	7. Maggie	G. <i>Little Women</i>
Dr. Thomas Stockmann ()	8. Meg	H. <i>The Mill on the Floss</i>
Tom Tulliver ()	9. Melanie	I. <i>Peter Pan</i>
Viola ()	10. Michael	J. <i>Three Sisters</i>
Wendy Darling ()	11. Peter	K. <i>Twelfth Night</i>
Willy Loman ()	12. Sebastian	L. <i>Wuthering Heights</i>