LIFE can't be trusted, whether

because of people or some other fault in the system. Either way it's a good thing for the novelist

and these four books have some

interesting things to say about

the unreliabilities of existence.

H. E. Bates seems to blame

people, though he's too polite to say exactly who. A distinct

air of reproof hangs over The

about James, a little boy whose

parents have gone off to get

brown in Tangier leaving him

in the care of seventeen year

old Gilly, whose snail-like eyes

made them think she wasn't

though, and meets a man who

plays the piano to her. Everyone

knows what that can lead to.

While Gilly is in bed James

spends the time talking to imag-

inary workmen and getting lost

interest of the book.

it's hard to feel

or anything "."

and this provides the main

Mr Bates stresses his theme

long for sentiment. People

There's no real attempt to

understand the way James feels

about his workmen-just the

pretty picture-and Mr Bates's

stuffed with cottonwool: "' Who

was this Schubert?' she sud-

never heard of him in the pops

I'm going to read his first as

Travel Notes is Stanley

denly said. 'Does he sing?

Crawford's second novel

for dialogue has been

disturbed by

Gilly has good legs,

Distant Horns of Summer. It's

Going under the waves

Michael Joseph 30s

By Mary Conroy

ages to get there persecution

confines him to his room. This

room is always the same and

the men he meets have an odd

resemblance to himself. Recog-

If you like ingenuity on the

lines of chocolate telephones and

Gulliver's Voyage to Laputa you

will find "Travel Notes" agree-

ably gymnastic, though Mi

Crawford is more interested in

vaulting the box than looking

inside it. His style is down-to-

earth and his humour ranges

ful verbal dribbles: "The las

resident left about 35 years ago,

taking the train, she thought,

for her father-in-law complained

frequently about there being

as others. The Hammering, by

Robert Troop, finds its thirty-

seven-year-old hero on the

morning of a real shocker. Peter

voodoo doll made up to look

like his mistress and he has

The book is intelligent and

lively but crowded. Although

lost £3,800 on the Stock

Horenson's wife gives him a

Some birthdays aren't as good

that makes you from Hegelian fooling to delight-

one missing."

Exchange.

THE DISTANT HORNS OF SUMMER/H E Bates/Michael Joseph 25s

THE OUTLAWS/by Luigi Meneghello, translated by Raleigh Trevelyan

dulgent and none of the charac-

ters convinces all the time. The

book is most enjoyable for its

isolated but frequent happy

phrasings: nicely heard child

talk, epigrams on marriage, and

a memorable quote from Laval:

"Je suis jusqu'au cou dans le

merde. Ne faites pas les vagues."

society in pieces. The factual

account of a Venetian resistance

group, the book is precise and

Meneghello was a partisan him-

self and can't see things in re-

assuring black and white. He

interprets the withdrawal into

the mountains as a hermit-like

retreat: more an act of purifica-

tion than a weapon against I

Fascism. His refusal to become

emotionally involved makes the

to time, and we occasionally

feel that it tells us more about |

the monotony of partisan life

than we wish to know. It is

hard to recognise the different

members of the group and their

deaths feel curiously abstract.

The book is sustained by its

tired innocence and the lucid

propriety of its imagery: "Some-

one had given Time a bash with

pieces were whirling in space."

l hammer, and the bits and l

It is well translated by Raleigh

Trevelyan, though I wish he

effect a satire-by-catalogue

wouldn't say "fed up of."

book seem spiritless from time

deliberately unheroic. Luigi

The Outlaws starts with

TRAVEL NOTES/by Stanley Crawford/Cape 21s

THE HAMMERING/by Robert Troop/Michael Joseph 30s

Philosophy of a comedian

year, was a natural Irish humor-ist with serious purposes. His weakness as a novelist was that he never quite discovered what the purposes were, but this was also his blessing as a humorist By Julian Symons Birds," is about a man writing so that when travelling from Anna Kavan's Ice is a distur novel about characters who get takes the journey by shutting world, which is approaching free of their creator. A funny himself up in a room with slowly as it becomes walled i idea or a bit of trickery? In picture postcards of the areas—ice through the effects of nu-O'Brien's hands it takes on to be traversed, several clocks, clear war. In this ever colder several fantastic extensions that barometric instruments, and an and more constricted univers make this one of the most bril- arrangement for regulating the the central character pursues liant artificial comedies of the light. Among the ideas played shimmering-haired girl in century.

man, a book written in 1940 but policemen who see everything or to destroy. The book's scenes not previously published, al- in human existence in terms of are sometimes deliberately though ideas in it have been bicycles, are various space-time sometimes perhaps involuntarily used in his later and inferior concepts, the atomic theory, the disconnected, as Miss Kavan works. What is it about? The shape of the earth (sausage- relates the break-up of the world publishers obligingly print as shaped, de Selby says), and the to the disintegration of th postscript a letter written nature of identity. character is a murderer who O'Brien's gifts was the power scenes of destruction have has been dead throughout the to exercise a peculiarly I rish curious disordered power and story, and that the main body—capacity for pursuing any idea—beauty. of the narrative takes place "in a sort of hell which he earned for the killing." .

At the end of the book the

whose works are quoted, and studied?

ICE/by Anna Kavan/Peter Owen 30s

a novel about a man writing a Bath to Folkestone he under- ing fantasy about the end of th with here, and elaborated in the 🐬 ghostly grey coat with a checke

Most of this is conveyed in satisfactory novel, but many of wildly funny dialogue. One of the distressing images and th

narrator's encounters with two lining, whom he wishes to save personality. "Ice" is hardly

action begins again. Hell is The Witnesses is a novel cyclical and everlasting, an about the origins and some of observation which is not so very the participants of the Russian new. These are O'Brien's serious Revolution. Part of it is straightpurposes, inadequately commun- forward historical fiction abou icated and best forgotten if we an American girl who marries are to get full pleasure from a into the Russian nobility, a story which in its playing about—device which permits glimpses with time and space, its flirting of, for instance, intrigues withirony and pawky, childish or in the dowager Empress's sewsophisticated humour is like ing circle and life on a rich bits of Sterne, James Branch estate, but this is much less Cabell, Lewis Carroll and important than the intrigues Beatrix Potter rolled into one. between the revolutionaries, Lengthy quotation would be Lenin, Trotsky, Martov, Plekneeded to show how O'Brien hanov and others. We are told gets his effects. I must be con- that its pseudonymous author tent to outline a few of the has "devoted twenty years to ideas he plays with. The studying the documents and narrator's actions, including the interviewing, often many times, part he plays in murdering an the surviving witnesses." What old man, spring from adherence information do we get from the to the doctrines of de Selby, documents so painstakingly

are discussed in long footnotes. Trotsky is introduced early hold hands in the sky." We have De Selby's theories include the on, and is one of the most Inessa Armand, in fact a revolu belief that ordinary houses are important characters. Almost tionary who travelled with Lenin mere large coffins, and that only every reference to him contains in the "sealed carriage" across rootless houses and houses some error. His father was not Germany, who in the Warir without walls are therapeutic. a lawyer nor his grandfather a version has a love affair with He maintains that night is "an rabbi, as is suggested here. He the hero and is endowed with insanitary condition of the used eleven pseudonyms, but an imaginary marriage to atmosphere due to accretions of never that of Vladek, which he Russian bourgeois, arranged h

Short Reports

(Cassell 36s). The setting of "The Plot" is Paris, and for three hundred pages, or just over one-third of the novel, Irving Wallace wheels in his characters, each of them loaded with a past like a traveller with a rucksack. Behind the novel is a generous amount of recent world history — presidential assassination, the Christine Kéeler affair, a defecting scientist. The action in which the principals are caught up revolves round the discovery that extremists in China and Russia, countries ostensibly at loggerheads, are in fact in collusion, planning Communist world takeover. Under some-back home. Ructions, soul-are in fact harmless times brusque exteriors, our principals have good hearts and are sweet to each other, really. Mr Wallace gets his scene right, be it night club, fashion show, but hardly the Oxford of Iris diplomatic function. If a shirt Murdoch or Wilfrid Sheed. drip-dries, he lets us know its fabric, but the novel moves by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, transsluggishly. Its real virtue is lated by Cyprus Brooks (Cape J. Whitehead (Constable 458). organisation, which along with 18s). Reprint of subtle and

(kindly) by lecherous colonel tween good and evil (i.e. and brutally by brutal major. between humdrum order and BALZAC AND HIS WORLD/by Found raving in Buchenwald by agreeable nihilism) is wholly Americans: one restores her to melodramatic. We accept it be- Felicien Marceau, translated by normal by induced amnesia, the cause, as in all Dürrenmatt's other marries her. Gestapo best work, the working out is Derek Coltman/W H Allen 70s colonel reappears in post-war so beautifully precise. Forget New York as successful archi- the philosophy if you like, and | By John Raymond tect: mutual attraction proves this short novel remains an too strong, and they elope. But excellently baffling puzzle, the Israelis are after Brunner- solved only in the last couple of man, and execute him outside pages.

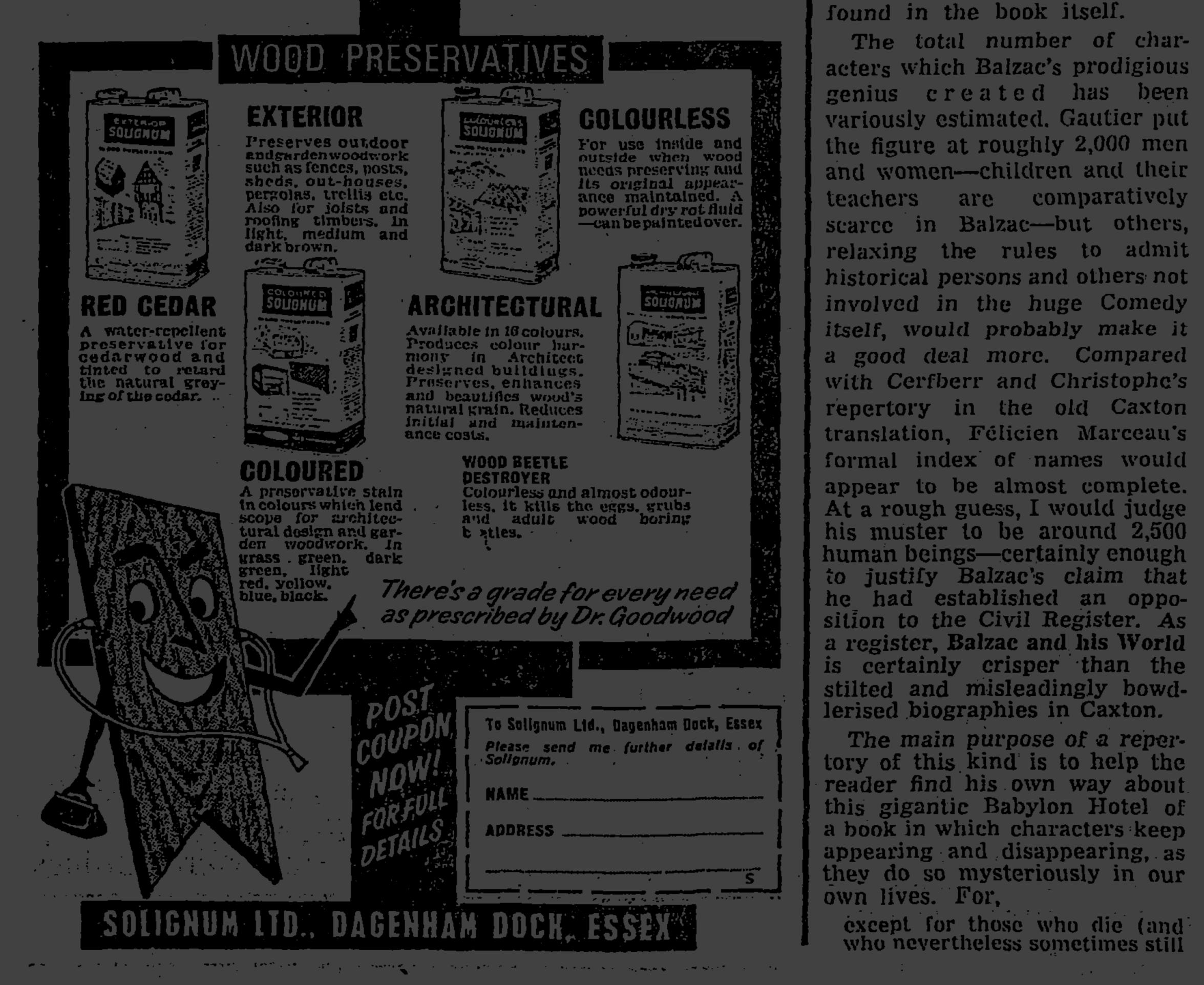
its documentation, does inspire convincing thriller-morality, The Rendezvous by Evelyn man dying by inches uses Anthony (Hutchinson 25s). Wholly unethical means for the Pretty Resistance courier caught ethical purpose of destroying a Two thousand five hundred people

The Plot by Irving Wallace a motel after surrender pact. Exciting, with an authentic ring, dutifully torrid and the greyflannelled husband simply too

A Spot Bigger Than God by Madeleine Riley (Gollancz 21s). Portentous but meaningless title for cheery first novel written, conceivably, with Sagan in mind. The scene is an improbable Oxford: Genny reads French indolently at LMH; Coming up for air: Catholic girl - friend Rose's mother keeps lodgings. The these giant Manta lodgings contain Genny's tame don, with whom she sleeps Rays, with wing enthusiasticany, nose runs a Hindu, whom she discovers to spans of up to 20ft., be spoken for as a bridegroom searchings, weepings into pillows, nobody gets any work unless frightened done except Genny's dull don. Happy ending: funny in parts,

The Judge And His Hangman

Gestapo, interrogated master villain. The struggle be-



s given throughout this book "Each new member of the party, after serving a term of probation, shall be crowne with a crown of narcissus," h rays with improbable skittish ness when we first meet him on a picnic in the Alps. In 1914 he has an imaginary meetin vith Plekhanov, "the father o Russian Marxism." who is shown as failing to recognise somebody whom he knew well and disliked

That is Trotsky in the Waring version. Then we have Lenin talking in a strange lyrical burst of "those St. Petersburg nights in spring when sunset and dawn Lenin to aid party funds. We have not only an imaginary marriage but an imaginary assassination of the Minister of the Interior by an imaginary Party

All this might not matter but the bedroom scenes are too much if "The Witnesses" was Error." put out as Baroness Orczy romance. In a book which depends for effect upon apparent factual detail, it can only be called deplorable.

'ABRAMKO, Achille, Ajuda,

Albon . . . Ysembourg, Zambin-

ella." The dust-cover of this

Michelin Guide to the "Comédie

humaine" reads rather as

though its author were calling

the roll of a detachment of the

Foreign Legion. It does in fact

hint at the vast, vibrant,

pullulating field of folk to be

soon as I can. It is one of those books which are absurd unless the investigation of Horenson's you think of its hero as yourcollapsing society is carefully self. In this case yourself is an done formal planning is no substitute for imagination and intrepid explorer who is generally prevented from reaching imagination is on the short side his destination by transport here. Mr Troop's varying styles difficulties. Whenever he mancan make his writing seem in-A first-class murder MR SYMONS' talent for seeing crime steadily, and seeing it whole, has tended to mask the fact that he also has in him a

broad streak of what solemn boobies are fond of calling "mere ingenuity."

Mr Symons has up to now been cautious about displaying and in its execution. How, then this disreputable aptitude too publicly. But with The Man Who Killed Himself all prudence is abandoned, and the result is a tour de sorce of artifices whose sheer unabashed cleverness puts it at once into the same exclusive fingers-of-one-hand class as "Le Mystère de la Chambre Jaune," "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" and "Trial and

When Arthur Brownjohn kills his tight-fisted, hectoring, snobbish wife Clare, he commits the perfect murder, faultless both in its complex planning

THE MAN WHO KILLED HIMSELF by Julian Symons/Collins 16s By Edmund Crispin

—since the murder genuinely is perfect—is Brownjohn to be given his come-uppance? He could get it irrelevantly, of course, by being run over by a bus; or tritely, by babbling in his cups; or coincidentally, by meeting the wrong person at the wrong time; or in a number of other shop-worn ways, such as committing a second murder, or going mad.

All these possibilities, and more, Mr Symons tantalisingly samples, as it were in vitro: this part of the story, though quite natural-seeming as narrative, is

But he guides the reader

is Vautrin's. They move off into seeing tour of the Comedy, himself. (Where, for instance,

on a sensible and original sight-

Sylvain Pons and the wearisome

chapter on the character of

therefore not the ideal introduc- Vautrin, the ex-convict turned self, even more as a théâtre

a host of great criminal incarna-

the Absolute and so on—are

to begin with that drooping discussed with a freshness and left to the experts. He quizzes

intimacy that could come only

from a lifetime of reading and

against all such unsatisfactory engines of retribution—the reason for their unsatisfactoriness being, obviously, that their connection with the crime they are supposed to punish is nugatory, when it exists at all. It is his own petard, we feel, that Brownjohn must be hoist with, not someone else's; and by petard, in this sort of context, we mean not just a personality defect, but the unalterable mechanics of the original crim-

It would be unfair to say how Mr Symons in fact achieves this seeming impossibility; but the stroke is a brilliant one, of irony as well as of contrivance. It sets 🖡 the final stamp of topmost quality on a continuously fascinating story which will certainly become one of the few real classics of its kind.

reflection. The writer is con-

cerned not merely to be im-

pressed with Balzac's stature

but to ask questions of his work

and, in doing so, of the man

would Balzac have stood in rela-

breezy jokiness in the style,

translation. As a novelist him-

Marceau is a bit of a droll and

only becomes dull when it is

Balzac—but he quizzes to very

Readers should not be put off

tion to the Dreyfus case?)

his enchanting new novel

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PELHAM BOOKS



PORTRAIT OF AN ANTI-VISECTIONIST

Believed—by those who've never met her—to be a crank, a sentimentalist, or simply out of touch. In point of fact a woman who is shrewd and well-informed. Has seen the figures—4.615,023 experiments on living animals in 1966. Has read case histories-of cruel cutting, freezing, burning, injecting with virulent diseases. Finds nothing much to show for it in medical discovery. Considers it a shameful practice in this modern age—especially as alternative methods are available—and supports the powerful, organised efforts of the N.A.V.S. to end it.

This is Vivisection



This experiment, performed recently in a Russian medical research laboratory, involved the grafting of the head of a small dog on to the head of an alsatian. According to The People, June 11th, 1967: "The day after the experiment the horrific two-headed dog you can see here was walking in the institute's grounds." REMEMBER: In Britain last year 4,615,023 experiments

were performed on living animals; the great majority without anaesthetics. PLEASE HELP US TO HELP THE HELPLESS

THE REAL PROPERTY OF THE PARTY The National 🔼 nlienclose my donation of

Wivisection Society Ltd. 51 HARLEY ST. LONDON W1 Please send a free specimen copy of your magazine." Animals' Defender" (Block capitals, please)

Charmer of a nation

survive in memory or in the round, at least, Balzac should

a zone of darkness. But how are by no means disposed to stop

we to know that they will not and make the customary ritual

re-emerge? They have done so gestures. For example, he more than once before. : . . spends no time on the tedious

influence they have had on be read at a gallop.

others), Balzac's characters

never come to an end. Nathan's

biography is not complete. Nor

M. Marceau takes the general

reader's knowledge of and

enthusiasm for his subject too

much for granted, and this is

tion to Balzac and his world.

(Since he is the greatest story-

teller in literature, the best

introduction is to try one of the

novels themselves, say "La

Rabouilleuse" or "Le Curé de

Tours," though taking care not

flower of fiction, "Eugénie

Grandet.") For the first time

ANATOLE FRANCE grew up beside the quais of Paris, where the crooked, cramped streets of the medieval city emerged blinking on to the light and

Opposite his father's bookshop rose the assertions of wealth and power: the Louvre, the Tuileries, the Palais Mazarin, still, in those days before the February Revolution, reminders Soif." of the Sun King, the Field of the Cloth of Gold and, above all, of 1789.

And only half a century before his christening, in 1844, in the church of St. Germain-des-Près, the doorsteps of the neighbouring rue St Marguerite had been washed priests in the September Massacres, while the shrivelled market women from whom France bought his goûter had the same harsh voices, wore the same rusty black-were, perhaps, the very same people as the tricoteuses who had bayed on the mob that autumn night. For France these two child-

ANATOLE FRANCE/by David Tylden-Wright/Collins 42s By John Whitley

spends no time on the tedious—this excellent book by a certain

Cesar Birotteau but says a great which jurs in places and may be

deal about Mme d'Espard; his due to a defective tone in the

chief of police (forerunner of du boulevard playwright, M.

tions, including Genet's Stili- he knows it—it is the price one

tano), is especially masterly. has to pay for his fresh and

Characters and themes—time, novel approach to a subject

money, religion, the Search for which is exciting in itself and

most beautiful place in the world" and the haunting fear of revolution personified by the

Paris mob in "Les Dieux ont His sense of insecurity, given edge by this fear, drove the gentle abstracted promeneur des quais to make the "direct

and deliberate assault on the heights of Parnasse, little thought or mercy for alongside " Tylden - Wright describes in chilling detail.

But once success came in 1881 with the delectably sentimental "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bon-France relaxed which nation's admiration over the next 43 years, through divorce, indirect responsibility for the death of two mistresses, general determining factors of his philandering, Socialism and a career: the quais he called "the consistent inconsistency.

For Mr Tylden-Wright "the essence of France's character lay in these contradictions . . . a great deal not only of his

creative, but of his staying power, came from them also. They kept him young." And young this determined cultivator of his own garden certainly was—to the despair of his editors and his mistresses. His, truly, was a rage to live; even while mourning his greatest love he could write: "La vie me reprend par toutes sortes de

This sympathetic graphy will help the general reader to share the enjoyment this great exponent of style, irony and charm found in life; though even France would hardly have said, as Mr Tylden-Wright claims, that the siege of Paris did not "create conditions of starvation or even of any great shortage."

curiosités et blandices."