

criminal classes, but is in most cases rather an incident in miserable lives." These are the sort of facts these important books ask us to remember with humility and imagination—"Here but for the grace of God drop I"—when we demand a life for a life.

THE OLYMPIAN

VICTOR HUGO, by André Maurois, translated by Gerard Hopkins; Jonathan Cape, English price 30/-.

VICTOR HUGO is not the poet for us that he is for the French; but few of us grew up without being profoundly affected by *Les Misérables* and *Notre Dame de Paris*. He was also a political figure—not the giant he would have liked to be, and too much of a poet to be at home in any sort of assembly; yet he touched the life of France at great moments, and he spoke always with courage and sometimes with powerful influence when freedom was in danger.

The story of his life is a story of work and love. Perhaps "love" is not the word that should be used to describe the promiscuous attachments which continued until his death at 83, but it can certainly be used of his long relationship with Juliette Drouet, the most enchanting and the noblest of all the women who crowd into these pages. Hugo was an astonishing person. His genius was undisputed, his vitality prodigious; he seemed in youth to reach

the mastery of words without effort, and thereafter to produce books which in his own day were acclaimed as masterpieces. The completeness of his success makes him too much of a phenomenon to be of lasting interest to students of creative writing; there was not enough internal conflict; he worked too much in black and white, and was often concerned with words rather than with ideas. But the man himself is a fascinating study in greatness and frailty.

André Maurois, a skilful and sympathetic biographer, is interested in the contradiction. "How came it," he asks, "that this prudent, economical man was also generous? That this chaste adolescent, this model father, grew to be, in his last years, an ageing faun? That this legitimist changed, first into a Bonapartist, only, later still, to be hailed as the grandfather of the Republic?" There are other questions, and some are hard to answer; but in putting forward the evidence M. Maurois has written an impressive and most readable biography. Nothing is concealed, and perhaps only in French writing could candour and delicacy be placed so adroitly in balance.

—H.

INDIA AND CHINA

IN TWO CHINAS. *Memoirs of a Diplomat*, by K. M. Panikkar; Allen and Unwin, English price 12/6.

THIS agreeably written slice of autobiography serves as introduction both to the new India and the new

China. Its character is fairly indicated in the sub-title.

It is the journal of a diplomat, and is therefore concerned in the first instance with international affairs, and the daily life of a distinguished visitor to Nanking and Peking. Yet the book gathers weight. Mr. Panikkar is a sensitive scholar with long political experience. His glance is shrewd, his range wide, and he knows the questions which unlock the tongues of peasants. There is rich material, therefore, in this record, discursive, fluent, personal, its author standing squarely in the centre of the stage, but dealing fairly and sympathetically with his varied personnel.

It is not soothing reading for those who feel that the West should have yet another chance to order the world according to its dictatorial will. The picture that emerges is that of Europe, weakened and preoccupied, withdrawing or withdrawn from vast areas where its influence was recently all-powerful, and of America, immensely powerful but as yet fundamentally unaware of the new vitality emerging in Asia: forces somewhat cruel and unbalanced, but deeply rooted in ancient civilisations, of a character than can perhaps be distorted, but not crushed, by physical force. Mr. Panikkar's conclusions are quietly but strikingly suggested in his closing pages; they should be weighed by those who are by geography, if not by taste, planted near the meeting grounds of East and West.

Incidentally, the character of Mr. Panikkar's book raises another somewhat disturbing question. Those who, with Nehru, have led modern India, and in some senses modern Asia, too, have known the West in its merits as well as in its defects. Their education, their interests and perspective are world-wide. They speak both languages. What of their successors? Will opportunities for understanding die as middle-aged men grow old?

—F. L. W. Wood

CLOSE TO NATURE

SPANISH MOUNTAIN LIFE, by Juliette de Bairacli Levy; Faber and Faber, English price 12/6.

THE author has achieved a small niche in English literature all to herself. She writes of gypsies, herbalism, the almost magical properties of water, Spanish mills and mountain herds with a passionate intensity, a kind of mysticism and often in splendid passages of light and colour. She and her little son Ruffik are found lodging in a mill. They suffer typhus, take part in the life of the country, climb the Sierra. Her love of nature reaches pantheism. The sun and the mountains are almost deified. The water of the cool crystal fountains, the high snows of the Sierra Nevada, the trees and fruits of Andalusia take on personality. The swallows are the angels. There are devils, too. Typhus for her is the "red cloaked fiend," malignant and personal. On the other hand,

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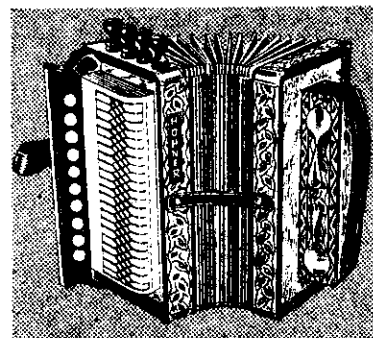
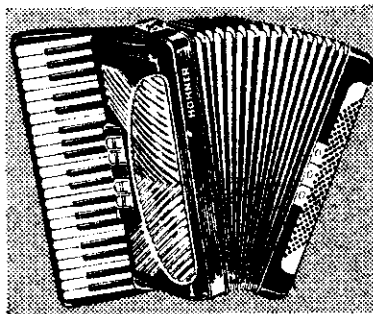
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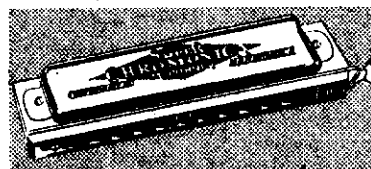
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