

This last venture underlines how wrong it is to think of the Everyman's Library as merely a series of popularly priced reprints. The greatest care is always taken over the actual editing of each work and in the case of classical and medieval texts constant attention has to be paid to new textual discoveries and research. In many cases the introductions to the volumes are themselves fine essays worth reading for their own sakes.

Everyman's has played a vital part in the formation of a new reading public. The occasion of the fiftieth anniversary is an appropriate moment to recall this achievement and wish the library increasing success in the future. In choosing classics they also help to some extent to make classics and it is fittest to think of the library in its director's words as "a wood of a thousand trees rather than a cemetery of a thousand monuments".

Offended Enemies

AN interesting sidelight was shed recently on the policy of certain German publishing houses. It arises over the famous P.O.W. escape story *The Wooden Horse* by Eric Williams which has been such a success in this country. The book has been published in 12 languages and in a total edition of 2½ million copies.

But it has never been published in Germany. Williams's agent, Mr. Robert Harben, recently offered the book to Hans Dulk Verlag of Hamburg and received a startlingly aggressive answer which he has reproduced in a letter to the *Bookseller*. The German publisher writes:

"... We would not refer to this book at all if it were not to tell you that we seriously hope you will find no (German)

publisher for it: It is a completely untruthful and tendentious work, a string of obnoxious inventions, and we would not touch it with a barge-pole. The most disagreeable chapter in a book which is already bad enough, is the tone in which the "courageous" Jew Sigmund boasts in Copenhagen of having waylaid and murdered many German soldiers.

"We do not know whether you are devoid of all feeling for what one can do and what one cannot do, and what one can expect from a German publisher and what not.

"We take it you have not read the book, since otherwise you cannot possibly have suggested that we should publish it. It does not surprise us that this book has even been published in the State of Israel: that is where it belongs."

Churchill's History

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL and his publishers have picked an apt date for the publication of the first volume of the great historian's new work, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. It will be issued on St. George's Day, April 23.

Initial volume is called *The Birth of Britain*, and will tell the story of Britain from pre-history days to the Battle of Bosworth. How rare it is to get an historical work like this—history written by a man who has himself made history.

I understand that 250,000 copies of the first volume have been printed, and the publishers confidently expect to sell many more. I believe their confidence will be proved correct. The first volume of Churchill's *The Second World War*, has sold 350,000 copies in this country alone. All four volumes of the new work have been what Sir Winston's publishers call "in the rough" for some time, but the final version of the second volume is well advanced. It will be published in December; the remaining volumes can be expected next year.

The World his Oyster

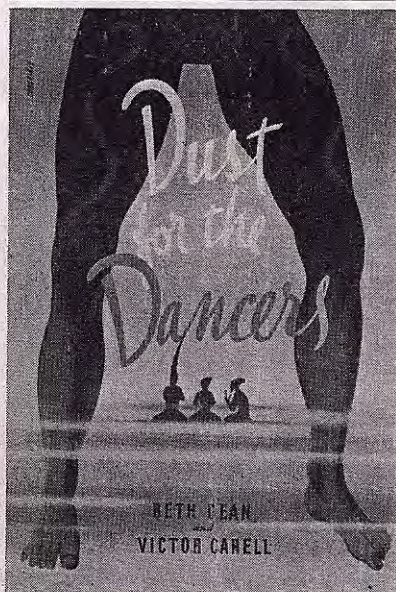
ONE of the busiest young writers today is Michael Swan, whose first novel, *The Paradise Garden*, was recently published by Hamish Hamilton. During the past 12 months he has journeyed through British Guiana to gather material for an outspoken book to be published by the Colonial Office. Much of the journey was on foot through trackless forest country.

He wrote two-thirds of his novel in Florence, at the Villa Mercede of Belosguardo, which Henry James used as background for his novel, *Portrait of a Lady*. It was completed in hospital in Trinidad, while he was lying on his back recovering from a severe wound in his side caused by contact with a coral reef while swimming under water.

Now he is at work on a new novel, has plans for yet another, and a travel book about British Guiana. The second novel planned will be about Augustus Cæsar's daughter Julia. Ovid makes an appearance in this book, and Swan will endeavour to present reasons why he was exiled to the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, he has just heard that his travel book, *Temples of the Sun and Moon*, which publishers Cape issued in 1954, has been published with great success in German.

Jacket of the Month



What YOU Think

Letters to the Editor should be as short as possible

Never heard of it

I AM intensely curious as to who is the arbiter of the fashion that contracts science-fiction to *Scific*, as cited by your reviewer Leo Harris.

I am fairly well acquainted with the world of science-fiction readers, I have published and edited numerous amateur magazines, have written professional science-fiction. I have been a member of the London Circle (this country's oldest club for science-fiction enthusiasts) for nearly ten years, and have never heard of this ridiculous phrase before. Could Mr. Harris elucidate, please?

A. V. Clark

7 Inchmery Road, Catford.

Leo Harris replies on page 29.

Greene and Catholic Dogma

WRITING of Graham Greene, the Catholic convert and novelist, John Davenport says: "Nor does it (becoming a Catholic) mean that you have to accept every single dogma of the Church."

This sentence shows rather surprising ignorance of Catholic fundamentals. No Catholic (unless he ceases to be a Catholic) puts the cart before the horse and accepts, or rejects, the dogmas of the Church piecemeal. He first accepts the divine authority of the Catholic Church as the divinely appointed custodian and teacher of religious truth to the whole world, down to the end of time. The divine authority of the Church once accepted, however, a Catholic then accepts all dogma that the Church proclaims as revealed truth, whether it be the dogma of transubstantiation of the Trinity, Indulgences or the Immaculate Conception. "Hook, line and sinker," maybe, to those outside the Church, but to the faithful, reasonable facets of an indivisible whole.

Miss M. Barrett

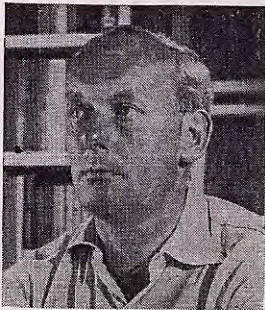
105 Kenilworth Court, Putney.

NEXT MONTH

We have been fighting a losing battle with rising costs of paper, blocks, and printing. Now, reluctantly, we have been obliged to raise the price of BOOKS AND BOOKMEN. From the May issue, the price will be two shillings.

We hope that the extra sixpence will in no way lose us the support of our readers, especially since we can now promise larger and better issues.

Look for



H. E. BATES

on the orange cover of the May BOOKS AND BOOKMEN on May 3—and inside Joseph Bradock on *H. E. Bates: The Man and the Story-Teller*, John Arlott on *Reading about Cricket*, George Kamm on *Paperback Revolution*, V. R. J. Clinton on *Writers in the Wilderness*, Personality of the Month: Ian Fleming, Author of *Promise*: Audrey Erskine Lindop, Dr. Donald Soper on *Naught for your Comfort*, John Pudney on *The Long Walk*. Fiction reviews by Reginald Moore and John Foss. Travel reviews by Bernard Gutteridge. Reports from correspondents all over world, and numerous other features.

This Month's Full BOOKGUIDE

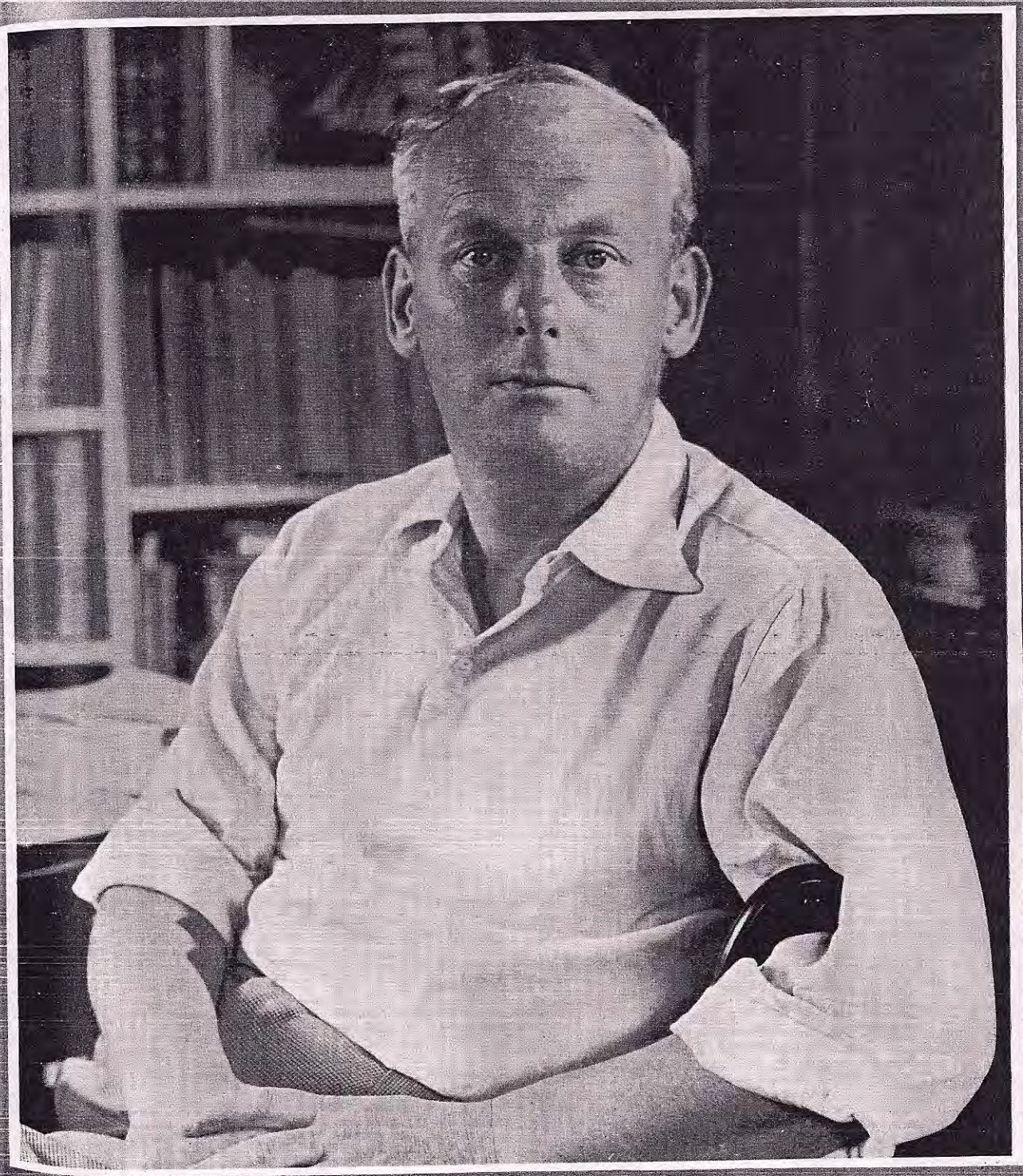
Books and Bookmen

MAY 1956

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H. E. BATES

His new novel, *The Sleepless Moon* will be published next month

H. E. BATES

THE MAN AND THE STORYTELLER

by Joseph Braddock

Author of over 40 books and 300 short stories H. E. Bates is now acknowledged as one of the masters of our literature. His new novel, The Sleepless Moon, (Joseph, 15s.) will be published in June.



H. E. BATES: 'His eyes are often dreamy, withdrawn, as he contemplates his inner visions.' (This photo and the portrait on the cover are by Mark Gerson)

IT is now almost thirty years since Constance Garnett, celebrated translator of Russian classics, asked Edward, her critic-husband, if he had any new geniuses to report. "Two," said Garnett, "a boy and a girl." The two geniuses were, as it turned out, both boys, but Garnett had made the pardonable error of supposing that the young author of *The Two Sisters*, a first novel of a girl's love, could only be a woman. The author was, of course, H. E. Bates, whose literary career, in consequence, was about to begin. Bates was, at the time, just twenty.

Since that time Bates has published over 40 books of an originality, quality, and personal flavour that have well proved Garnett's judgment and faith in him. He has written more than 300 short stories, many of which are supreme in this genre; his novels have been translated into 16 languages; and university students all over the world, as far away as Tokio, now do their University Literature theses on his work. What other living writers of fiction can match this? Who else is there so prolific who has maintained such a high standard of achievement?

H. E. Bates was born in 1905 in the town of Rushden, near the border of Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. His father was in the staple trade of Northamptonshire, shoe-making; and his grandfather was a natural country aristocrat of fine character and noble appearance, with white hair and an aquiline nose, who couldn't write but could read, and actively assisted Liberal causes in Northamptonshire. Bates tells an amusing story of his grandfather taking him on his knee when he was small. Looking at the shape of the child's head, the old man used to repeat emphatically: "The boy's a masterpiece!"

The True Clay

THERE is no doubt that Bates owes much to his peasant ancestry. By living close to the soil, his parents and grandparents gave him things he could have learnt in no school: a sensuous, precise appreciation of sights and sounds, of flowers and rivers, of people with their hard living to make, which he has claimed as "the true clay of my art." Also it was an advantage that he was brought up within reach of the two river valleys of the Ouse and the Nene, where he learned to fish and skate, to know the ways of poachers and game-keepers. It

is no accident that he has called one of his books of essays *O! More than Happy Countryman*.

Poet-Painter

PERHAPS Bates's most notable feature as a writer is that he is in essence a poet. Had he been born into the age of Keats, he would almost certainly have written in verse. The mention of Keats is, I think, apt, for Bates, too is passionately sensitive to "the principle of beauty in all things"; not least in women, as a glance at his young heroines will show. Characteristically, his lovely house at Little Chart, near Ashford, is full of very fine pictures, mostly French impressionists. One thinks of him often as a poet-painter, so sensuously, almost physically, does he react to the objective world of light and colour. This passage from *The Lily*, intuitive, compelling, has something of the lush control of a painting by Renoir:

'On summer days after rain the air was sweetly saturated with the fragrance of the pines, which mingled subtly with the exquisite honeysuckle scent, the strange vanilla heaviness from the creamy elderflowers in the garden hedge and the perfume of old pink and white crimped-double roses of forgotten names.'

After leaving Kettering Grammar School, to which he had won a scholarship, Bates became a provincial journalist; but he hated the job and left it to enter the office of a leather warehouse as a clerk, where he spent much time tying up parcels, but still more writing. He had just got the sack from this job when he was discovered by Garnett, who had already acted as a kind of literary midwife to a great number of distinguished writers, including Conrad, Hudson, Galsworthy, and D. H. Lawrence. Under Garnett, Bates served a gruelling apprenticeship, which proved of incalculable value to him as a serious artist.

Gardening and Cricket

IN 1931 Bates married a girl from his own town, Rushden, and came south to live at Little Chart where he had bought "a sturdy Kentish granary of stone and tile" and modernized it. Here he found peace to develop as a writer; also to become a keen gardener and the village cricket captain. He and Mrs. Bates were to bring up a close-knit family of four children, two girls and two boys. Garnett was invited to visit the young

people, but was apprehensive lest Mrs. Bates should prove to be some flashy siren fatal to his protégé's future! However, he was quickly charmed and reassured, delighted to find that Mrs. Bates could give him as good as she got, putting him firmly in his place with a single well-aimed remark: "Mr. Garnett, there are some things about my husband that even you don't know."

Horror and Beauty

BATES'S large body of work falls naturally into three groups. These are the short stories; the war novels; and the English country novels, together with the books of country essays. An interesting point to notice is that, while the short stories may have European, or even Far Eastern, settings, with the English novels Bates takes his place as a writer as regional as, say, Hardy or Sheila Kaye Smith; for Eversford is clearly recognisable as Rushden, and the scenes are all restricted to that Midland patch of country between the Nene and Ouse valleys. It was a novel *The Poacher*, with a book of short stories *Cut and Come Again*, that won for him his first public, stories like *The Kimono*, *A Threshing Day for Esther* and *The Mill* being reprinted again and again.

The war novels began to be written when, as 'Flying Officer X', Bates was commissioned to write about the crews of the bombers and fighters of the R.A.F. Several million copies of these tales, contained in *The Greatest People In The World* and *How Sleep the Brave*, were sold. But in the novella *The Cruise of the Breadwinner*, describing with masterly realism the machine-gunning of a small patrol fishing-boat and the courage and wonderful behaviour of a man and a boy, I believe Bates has produced a masterpiece of the creative imagination equal to the greatest of English sea tales. Only lately he told me that, out of all his work so far, he likes *The Breadwinner* and the long short story *The Bride Comes to Eversford* best.

During the latter part of the war Bates went to Burma and India and what he saw there, both of violence and colour, came as a shattering shock to his extreme sensibility. The three Far Eastern novels, beginning

(continued on page nine)

with *The Purple Plain*, includes scenes of stark horror and glowing beauty unpromisingly written in a mature, incisive prose. When confronted with a world of inhuman tragedy, the artist's retort is to depict it truthfully and get it out of his system. Bates managed the Service idiom perfectly, whether between men and men, or men and nurses. He could project scenes of ugliness and cruelty as well as scenes of beauty and gentleness. How first-class is the opening of *The Purple Plain*, which paints the country and suggests war:

'Shy flocks of small banana-green parrots had begun to come back to the pipul trees about the bombed pagoda. But across the rice-fields, scorched and barren now from the long dry season, only a few white egrets stepped daintily like ghostly cranes about the yellow dust in the heat-haze. Nothing else moved across the great plain where for three years no rice had grown.'

At once we want to go on, to know what happens next. To produce such an effect in the reader has always been the trump card of the good story-teller, and this card Bates has never lacked. Incidentally, I believe that the notable success of the Technicolour film of 'The Purple Plain,' starring Gregory Peck and a beautiful Burmese girl in the leading parts, was greatly due to the fact that the script kept so close to the book.

"If one set Mr. Bates's best tales against the best of Tchekov's," Graham Greene has written, "I do not believe it would be possible with any conviction to argue that the Russian was a finer artist. Mr. Bates is supreme among English short story writers." What sort of a man then is H. E. Bates, whose finest stories, I agree, challenge comparison with the best work of Tchekov, as with that of Maupassant, Katherine Mansfield, and Ernest Hemingway?

Withdrawn Yet Fruity

PHYSICALLY, at fifty-one, he is shortish, broad, with short arms and curiously small practical hands. His nobly shaped head must be even more impressive than when his grandfather saw it; though his hair has receded and is almost white. His complexion is red and outdoor — he does most of his writing in an open summerhouse in the garden from early morning until lunch — but it is his rather thin, expressively sensitive lips and blue eyes that tell us most. His eyes are often dreamy, withdrawn, as he contemplates his inner vision; but they light up with an enormous warmth of genial kindness; or quickly become as wickedly alive with fruity humour as those of the one character, 'My Uncle Silas,' that he has lifted straight out of real life, as Dickens did Mr. Micawber.

Back to Simple Folk

THIS Uncle Silas was a certain Joseph Betts, husband of Bates's maternal grandmother's sister, who lived to be over ninety and now lies buried in Bedfordshire. He loved the ladies; had usually drunk "enough beer to float the Fleet"; was a wonderful gardener; lied and poached; yet remained a genuine and lovable character. There was no strain of the Puritan about Silas; but, as a picture of an extra-vital, delicious old rural reprobate, he surely stands in the main line of English comic characters, through Falstaff and Tony Lumpkin. Naturally Bates does none of those reprehensible things which he attributes to Silas; but, for all his love of paint-

ing, good food and wine, travel and knowledge, like Silas he remains obstinately and delightfully English.

And now Bates would seem to be back working chiefly at the group of English novels, with such stories as *Love For Lydia*, *Dulcima*, *The Grass God*, *The Feast of July*, and his latest book of tales, *The Daffodil Sky*. Some of these last stories, *Elaine*, *Roman Figures* and *Go*, *Lovely Rose*, for example, I am sure he has never excelled. His new book, *The Sleepless Moon*, is to be published in June. Bates is not really happy in cities, which he finds brittle. He has no sympathy at all with false smartness and artistic pretension. His main concern is with the effect of nature on the lives of simple folk; with farm and field, office and little shop. He has no moral axe to grind, all that interests him is the truth, and he can write about working men and women with real insight and compassion.

A significant thing is that many of his short stories deal with children in the child's own world, or the adult world seen through a child's eyes, as in the exquisite *A Flower Piece*, in *Alexander*, *The Cruise of the Breadwinner* or *The House with the Grape-Vine*. Indeed, many of his adult characters remain in themselves child-like, even childish, which leads directly to the tragedies of the undeveloped girls in *Dulcima* and *The Mill*.

Tension and Power

IT has been well said that novels are about chaps; so perhaps the first reason for Bates's popularity is that his books have been written out of a passionate curiosity about men and women. To his searching and tireless inquisitiveness, add the gifts of tension and the power to distil a scene so sharply that everything is before our eyes. He is, of course, a brilliant technician; but he is also a highly gifted and vocational writer whose stories yield themselves in the end, in the sense Keats meant, "as naturally as the leaves to a tree." Bates himself has said: "I carry stories around in my mind 24 hours a day until they finally come to life."

H. E. Bates's writing is his life and gives him more pleasure than anything else. Because he writes to please himself, he pleases us. Like the Russian novelist Turgenev he can say "All my life is in my work," and the unmistakable flavour of that work is as strong and pungently sweet as the countryside that surrounds him.

Writing is Self-Taught

'It is very easy, very pleasant, and perhaps very stimulating to read *The Pit* and the *Pendulum*, *Boule de Suif*, or *The Killers*; but to dissect, absorb, and profit from the particular qualities which make these stories what they are is another matter entirely. The chemist learns analysis, aided by the text book, in the laboratory. For the writer there are few first-class text books of analysis; there are no laboratories; there are few places where he can go and, under qualified teachers, learn for himself the constituent properties of words, the analysis of style, the formulae for this effect and that, the rules of self-expression. For him analysis must be self-taught, acquired by such experiments as he cares to conduct for himself, defeated again and again by rejection.'

From *The Modern Short Story*
by H. E. Bates (Nelson).

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