

A Marshall Cavendish

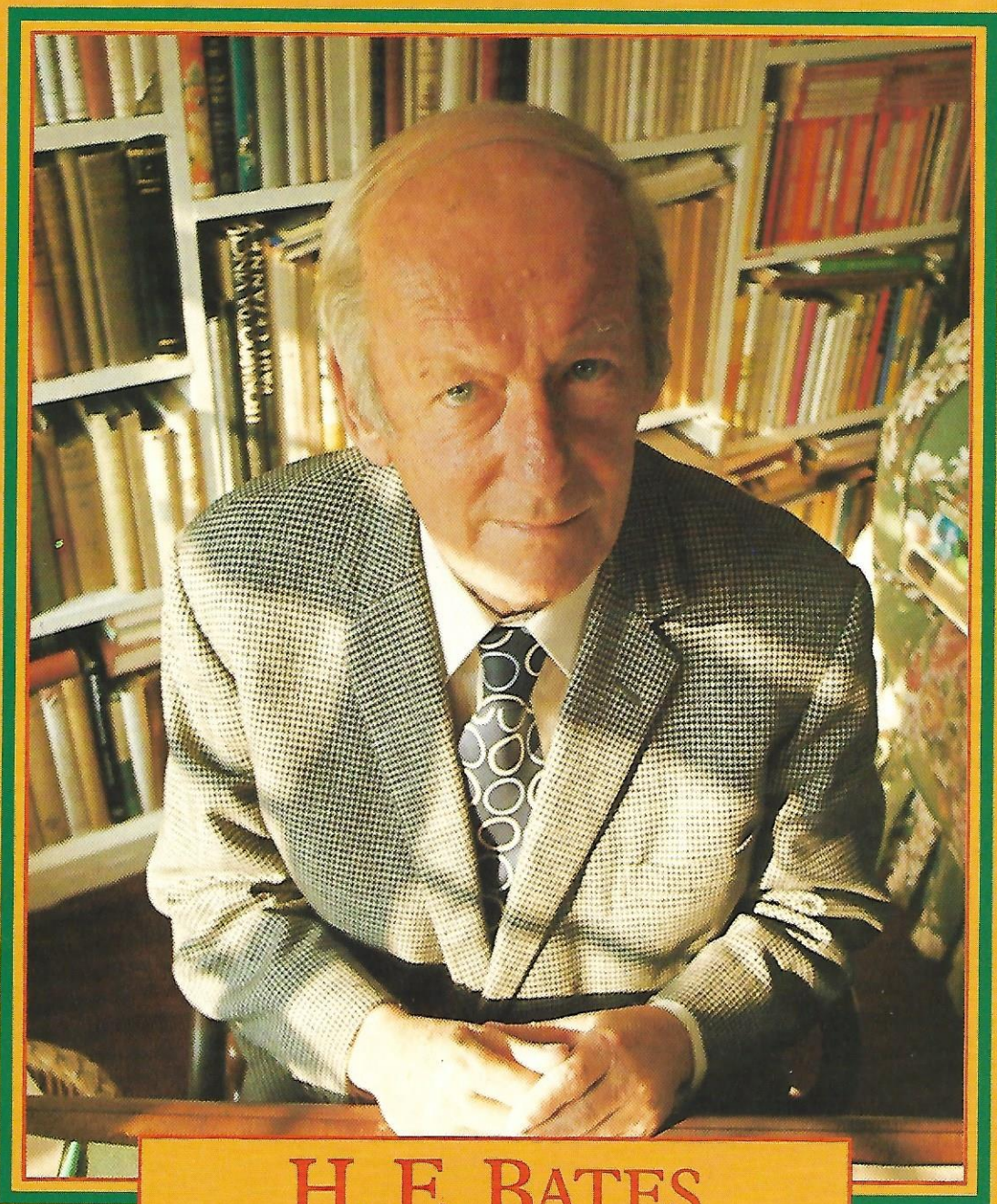
32

Fortnightly Collection

U.K. £4.

THE GREAT WRITERS

Their lives, works and inspiration



H. E. BATES

Love for Lydia

CONTENTS

THE GREAT WRITERS

Their lives, works and inspiration

Plan of the Collection

The Great Writers

introduces the best books by the most famous writers in the English language. The collection builds into a superb library that spans an entire literary heritage.

PARTS 1-26

19th-Century Writers

British and American authors who established 'The Age of the Novel'.

PARTS 27-44

20th-Century Writers

Novelists, poets, and short-story writers, from the post-Victorians to 'The Moderns'.

PARTS 45-52

Classic Writers

The giants of early literature – including Chaucer and Shakespeare.

PART 32 VOLUME 3 H. E. BATES

–746–

The Writer's Life A Rural Spirit

Shaped and succoured by the everyday life of a rural community, H. E. Bates found his world abruptly expanded by fame, war and travel. But he always remained true to his English roots.

–752–

Reader's Guide Love for Lydia

In this poignant tale, Bates captures the ecstasy and acute sadness of first love, charting the bitter-sweet lives of young people linked by both fate and friendship.

–758–

Writer at Work Painting with Words

Likened to a 'Renoir of the typewriter', H. E. Bates used words with the panache of a painter to shape and colour England's landscape.

–764–

Sources and Inspiration Changing Times

Industry's encroachment on the countryside, and the gradual disappearance of age-old farming techniques transformed more than the landscape: it changed the nature of rural life.

COVER PORTRAIT

H. E. Bates photographed in 1973 by G. Finlayson/Daily Telegraph Colour Library

The magazine is designed to give a greater understanding and enjoyment of the author's character and work, in the context of his or her own times. Each magazine describes the author's life, analyses the chosen book, looks at the author's other major writings and focuses on the mainsprings of inspiration.

INDEXES

The last issue in every binder (every 13th issue) will contain an index to that volume. The last issue of the collection will include a fully cross-referenced index to the entire contents of **The Great Writers**.

© Marshall Cavendish Ltd. 1986/87/93
Published by Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd., 119 Wardour Street London W1V 3TD, England.
Typesetting by Litho Link Limited.
Printed in Great Britain.

HOW TO CONTINUE YOUR COLLECTION

Most of our customers prefer to collect issues from their newsagents by placing a regular order. To help you keep **GREAT WRITERS**, we are pleased to offer the following services:

DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR

We offer a full subscription service in the UK. Issues are sent to your home **POST FREE** and will be despatched to arrive on the day of publication.

MISSING ANY ISSUES?

If you have missed any issues in your collection, don't worry. We can supply them through our Back Numbers Department. NB. Orders are subject to availability.

YOUR FILING SYSTEM

You can order binders to preserve and organise **GREAT WRITERS**. Each binder holds 13 issues.

HOW TO PAY

SUBSCRIPTION

Each issue costs £4.50 (IR£5.30) NB. We require a minimum order of 10 issues for subscription. Please mark your envelope **GREAT WRITERS SUBSCRIPTION**.

BACK NUMBERS

Each issue costs £4.50 (IR£5.30) including p&p. Please mark your envelope **GREAT WRITERS BACK NUMBERS**.

BINDERS

Each binder costs £5.95. Details on special offers are available in early issues. Please mark your envelope **GREAT WRITERS BINDERS**.

Payment should be made by cheque or postal order to: **Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd.**, and sent to **MARSHALL CAVENDISH, MARLBOROUGH ROAD, ALDBOURNE, MARLBOROUGH, WILTSHIRE SN8 2HP.** TEL. 0672 40776.

In the following countries, services are available as in the UK:

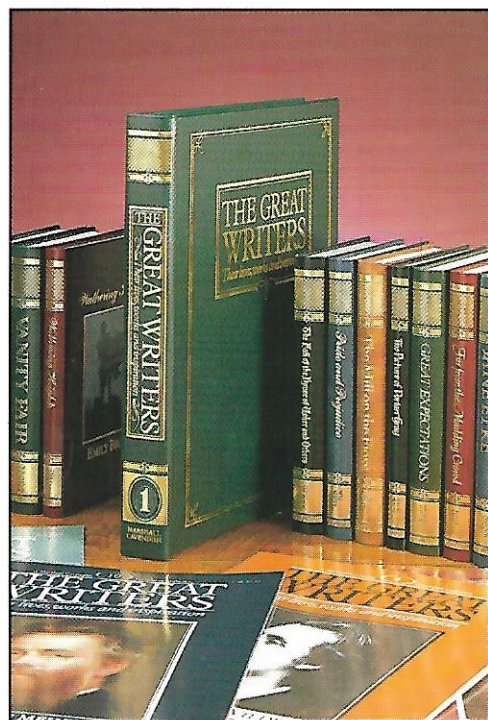
AUSTRALIA

Back Numbers: Write to Gordon & Gotch Ltd., PO Box 290, Burwood, Victoria 3125 (Enclose cover price plus 95c p&h per issue).

NEW ZEALAND & MALTA

Back Numbers and Binders are available through your newsagent. Details on special offers will appear in early issues.

Binders: Details will appear in later issues.



Each binder holds 13 issues, Please keep the covers on when you place them in the binders.



Courtesy of Mrs. H. E. Bates

H. E. BATES

—◆ 1905-1974 ◆—

One of the great English storytellers, H. E. Bates wove his art from the tiniest and most unlikely shreds of inspiration. He was discovered at the age of 20 and steered towards professionalism by the finest of mentors. His talent withstood ill health and changing fashions, and enabled him to make the leap into the modern world of film and radio. But he remained a countryman first and foremost, immortalizing the particular English landscape he knew so well with his sensuous prose.

A RURAL SPIRIT

Shaped and succored by the everyday life of a rural community, H. E. Bates found his world abruptly expanded by fame, war and travel. But he always remained true to his English roots.

Bates fondly described his family as 'simple country folk', yet despite his later literary success, he made no serious attempt to leap from their world to a more dazzling one filled with celebrities and literati. Bates' first loves, the countryside and ordinary people, remained the core ingredients of both his life and his fiction.

BOOT BOYS

Herbert Ernest Bates was born on 16 May 1905, at Rushden, in the Nene Valley, Northamptonshire. His formative years were most significantly shaped by his grandfather and father. The latter endowed him with a love for literature and music, the former with a profound feeling for Nature. Both men worked in a local shoe factory, as did Bates' mother, Lucy, who taught him self-reliance and discipline. The family were ardent Methodists and might attend church five times on a Sunday – one consequence of which was that the young Bates grew up with a strong animosity towards organized religion.

In compensation, Rushden had the advantage of beautiful country walks, and Bates also had the chance to join in farm work at harvest time. Such was the pull of the outdoor world that Bates was intensely bored by school, although he was no intellectual slouch. As the brightest in the class, he was given a separate desk and a specially tailored

curriculum and, in his own words, he 'soared away' to academic excellence.

In those days, his sights were set on becoming an artist and he took sixpenny lessons from a lady art teacher. His other spare time was filled with football, cricket and reading. Bates' father owned an enormous stock of novels, including those by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling and J. M. Barrie. And a couple of years before leaving school at 16½, he discovered his true vocation. Asked to write an essay on Shakespeare by an enterprising new teacher, he 'suddenly knew, incontestably that [he] was or was going to be a writer'. From now on he devoured even more books, extending his reading to Milton's prose and the Authorized Version of the Bible.

When he left school, he was 'naïve, extremely gauche and extremely sensitive'. He obtained work as a junior reporter on a local paper, but the daily diet of weddings and rural trivia bored him. Clearly not a budding journalist, Bates resigned and was faced with a bleak future. His next job, unpromising as it seemed, was to prove very useful, for it provided invaluable time.

Now aged 17, Bates began work as a clerk in a leather factory. But there was so little work to do, once the day's orders had been sorted out, that he was free to write. He later described his first effort at a novel as a 'shapeless, amateurish, useless

William Stewart MacGeorge The Orchard/Fine Art Photographic Library

'Oh! how we walked.
Winter and summer we tramped . . . the footpaths, the blackberry hedges, the river tow-paths, the woodland ridings . . . my father striding out athletically.' Thus Bates grew to love the countryside (above).

Rushden, Northants
'A palpably dreadful mess of that mixture of blue slate, factory, chapel and that harsh Midland red brick which equally oppresses the heart, soul, eye and senses.' Bates' description of his home town (left) shows less affection than he felt for the 'dry, droll, unshaven independence' of its inhabitants. Most worked at the town's many shoe factories: 'I became very proud of my shoemakers', recalled Bates, who styled his fictional Evensford on Rushden.





monster'. But with his next, *The Two Sisters*, again written in the warehouse, he struck gold.

A year passed before the third and final draft was ready, in 1925, to send off to London publishers. But before he received their response, he was sacked from the warehouse and, at a time of appalling unemployment, went on the dole. He put his enforced idleness to good use, however, reading the finest short-story writers such as Chekhov, Maupassant, Gorki and Flaubert.

Meanwhile, at a party, Bates met an attractive, quick-witted 17-year-old, Marjorie ('Madge') Cox. Years before, his grandfather had actually saved Madge's life, dashing into her family's cottage one night to save the child when the nearby shoe factory had burst into flames. Bates' joy at meeting her was increased by a generous reply from the publishers Jonathan Cape: they were offering to publish his novel for the then-excellent sum of £25. To his amusement, they assumed the

Summer delights

Young H. E., his mother and baby sister are pictured above at the annual town picnic on Rushden's 'Wesleyan Tea Field'. Harvest found him in the fields (below). (Bates is the child at the foot of the ladder.)



Threshing - Small Holdings, Highgate

Key Dates

- 1905 born Rushden, Northamptonshire
- 1925 first novel, *The Two Sisters*
- 1931 marries Madge Cox; moves to Kent
- 1941 joins RAF and writes under the name Flying Officer X
- 1944 *Fair Stood the Wind for France*
- 1945 posted to India
- 1952 *Love for Lydia*
- 1969-72 three-volume autobiography
- 1973 awarded CBE
- 1974 dies at Canterbury

Courtesy of Mrs H. E. Bates

author was a woman, and had addressed the letter to 'Miss Bates'.

The London meeting with Cape's directors and reader was momentous. Not only did it launch Bates' literary career, but it also introduced him to his future advisor and friend Edward Garnett. Garnett gave Bates the tough, incisive criticism that this raw, largely self-taught young man so badly needed, and turned him from a sporadically talented writer into a consistently good one. Garnett also helped Bates through many financial crises, and found ready markets for his short stories among his various literary contacts.

This and subsequent visits to London were the first taste Bates had really had of life beyond the Nene Valley. He was initially delighted by it. By contrast, the world back home suddenly seemed like a 'totally negative wasteland'. But there was worse disillusionment to come: Madge rejected his proposal of marriage.

Bates moved south to London to work in a

A trip to London

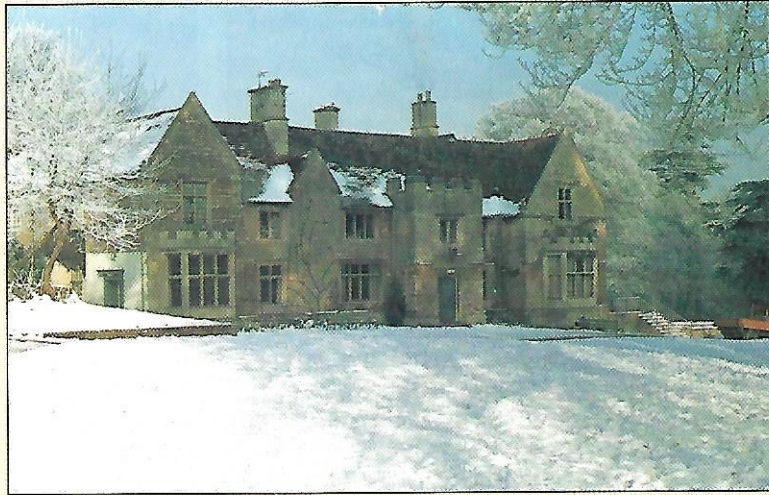
At the tender age of 20 (right), Bates was invited up to London (centre) to meet Jonathan Cape, the publisher who had accepted his first novel. At a sophisticated, literary lunch in Soho, Bates felt out of his depth. But his "innocent struggle with the parmesan" paled into insignificance against his next encounter – when his hero, Cape's reader, Edward Garnett entered the restaurant he was overwhelmed.



Fact or Fiction

RUSHDEN HALL

As he wrote *Love for Lydia*, Bates drew on the memory of a visit to Rushden Hall some 30 years before as a reporter. He had 'the strangest feeling that the shaping Divinity had actually sent me there for a purpose'. At about the same time, Bates glimpsed a beautiful girl in a pony-trap. Time fused these events: the girl became Lydia, the Hall the home of the Aspens.



David Hall

bookshop, heartened afresh by the encouraging reviews of *The Two Sisters* and a new friendship – with the pianist Harriet Cohen. The two almost immediately formed a close bond. Harriet was eager to flirt, but not to take the relationship any further. She filled the void left by Madge and introduced him to the leading artists of the day. But a London lifestyle was not for Bates, and he soon returned to Rushden – to dancing, cricket and football, and to tackling a more ambitious, longer novel: *The Voyagers*. It was a bad point in his life which he later dismissed as a 'literary penal servitude'. He had little money and was terrified that his new novel was not going to shape up.

SHAKEN AWAKE

When Bates finished *The Voyagers*, he was so 'utterly exhausted' that he went to Germany for his first trip abroad. But he did not complete his itinerary because an affectionate letter from Madge sent him hurrying back to England. More than just Madge was waiting for him.

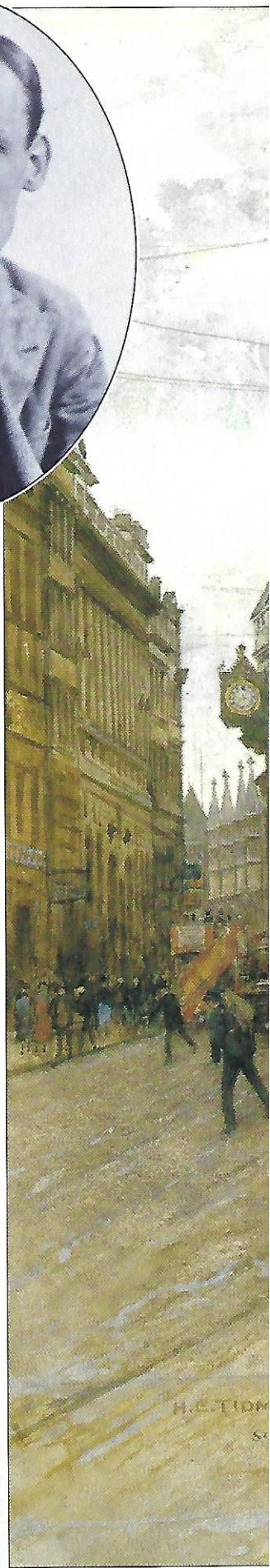
Edward Garnett had read *The Voyagers* and was not pleased. He rejected it as 'an utter absolute disaster'. Bates later recalled how 'that morning [Edward] hit me with everything he'd got'. Though dismayed, Bates knew Garnett was right and was quickly aware that the criticism was aimed at freeing the real artist in him. As Bates wrote in his autobiography, Garnett's attack 'in the finest sense . . . woke me'.

The best of Bates' social life centred on The Cearne, Edward Garnett's stone cottage on the North Downs of Sussex. A typical weekend included a visit from T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia) who biked up from Dorset for tea. Such company was stimulating and, meanwhile, there were trips to London for the theatre and concerts.

Now, in his mid-twenties, Bates married Madge. Once, as a child, glimpsing Kent through a train window, he had been struck by the 'strong impression that somehow this was my second home'. And true to his premonition, Bates now moved to Kent where he and Madge bought a

Courtesy of Mrs H. E. Bates

H. E. Tatham: St Dunstan's, Fleet St 1922/The Guildhall, City of London/Bridgeman Art Library





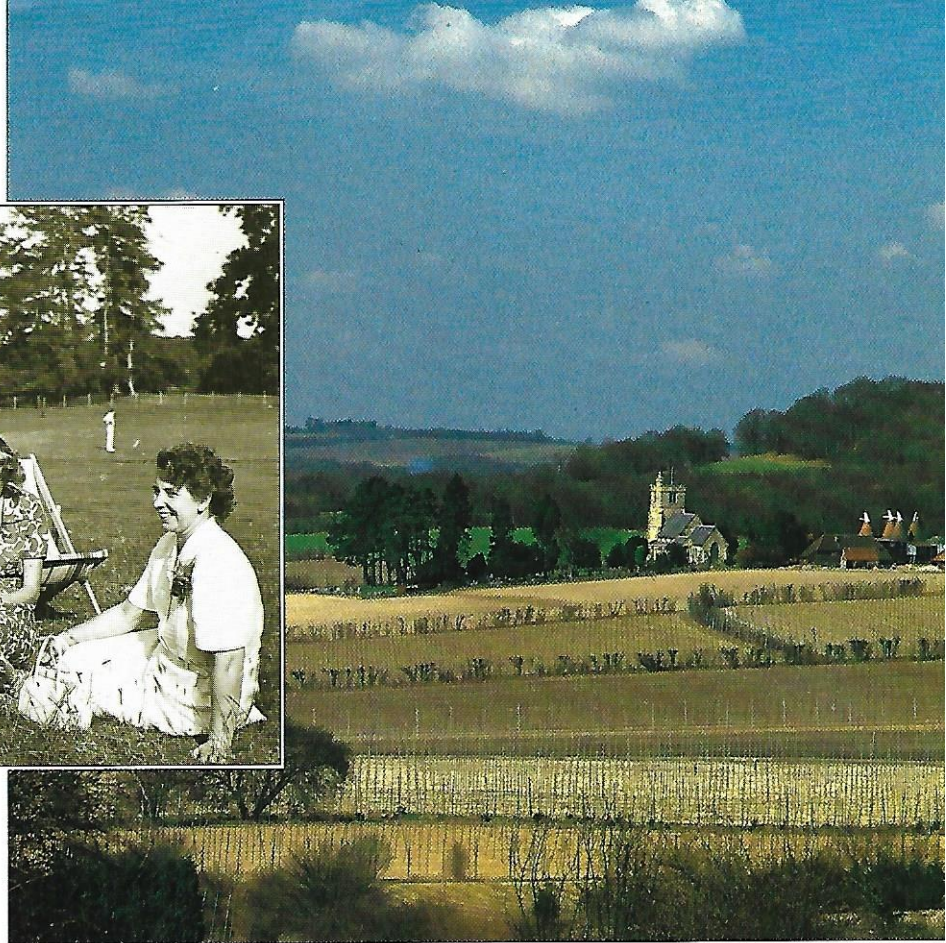
Man of cultivation
Bates was never so happy as when he was in his garden (above). He wrote several gardening books.

Joining the few
A year after witnessing the Battle of Britain (below), Bates became the official 'voice' of the RAF pilot, writing stories based on the men's tough, courageous lives.

derelict granary. Here, 'while Madge attacked the house and its domestic affairs', Bates began hewing a garden from the wildly overgrown farmyard. It was to be his constant joy and solace, as he created and worked at his vision over the next 40 years.

Meanwhile the Bateses lived on £2 a week, and soon they were expecting a first child. Where a lack of money had previously been a problem, it now became a nightmare. Bates worked 'like hell', writing short stories in the morning, articles in the afternoon and reviews in the evening. His remorseless schedule resulted in one alarming blackout when, wandering the streets of London





for an hour or so, he did not know who or where he was.

However, Bates' relentless work did pay off with two successful pieces, *The Mill* and *The Fal-low Land*. Throughout the rest of his twenties he struggled to get by financially, and became increasingly prone to severe attacks of abdominal pain and 'always . . . the fear of drying up, of greater debts, of failures and rejections'.

Edward Garnett's death in 1937 devastated Bates, but by now he knew that he had acquired the instincts of a novelist. He was proved right when *Spella Ho*, his next work, was reprinted three times in a year. The money from this work and from the American publishers (who asked him to the United States to serialize it) made him financially secure for the first time in his life. But private success was suddenly countered by public terror. Bates returned to an England on the brink of World War II.

FLYING OFFICER X

Bates and Madge determined to take a last look at Europe before the conflagration: they visited Yugoslavia and Italy, and returned invigorated. Meanwhile, Garnett's son David had taken over as Cape's reader and was waiting to lacerate Bates for spawning a second 'monster' (a novel of 'almost unrelieved melancholy' about a war widow). Fortunately, David also knew how to tinge criticism with encouragement, so that Bates was soon hard at work again, writing more short stories and a survey of the genre.

With a growing family to support, Bates accepted the post of literary editor of the *Spectator* magazine. But he was unsuited to the job and was eventually fired. In 1941 he was given a commission in the RAF's 'Public Relations Department' as a short-story writer. Given the nominal rank of squadron-leader, he was allowed a degree of freedom to observe most aspects of a pilot's life, but was not allowed to risk his own, which meant flying missions were ruled out. Nonetheless, he found no shortage of material. His first piece con-

Family man

Bates' family is pictured above watching him play cricket: Madge right, his parents and his four children. He revelled in the Kent countryside (above) and its rural pursuits.

Screen success

Film adaptations of such books as *The Purple Plain* (below) brought financial comfort to an author already rich in reputation.

cerned an officer's awful duty of informing a pilot's relatives that he has been killed in action. Bates' superiors were so impressed with his work that he was given the grand pseudonym of Flying Officer X and, using the name, he now tackled *Fair Stood the Wind for France*.

Bates' spell in the RAF was hallmarked by bouts of stomach pain, and the psychological anguish of watching German doodle bugs (pilotless planes packed with explosives) scream across the Kent skyline towards London. Later he was given the opportunity of travelling to France to inspect the launch sites. He also went further afield – to Malta, Italy, Cairo, Calcutta and Burma. All the while he was storing up incidents and characters for his future fictions.

Bates returned home in 1945 but was at once paralyzed with fear that he could not write. The

