

MR. BATES'S NEW NOVEL

A HOUSE OF WOMEN. By H. E. BATES.
Cape. 7s. 6d.

After Luke Bishop, poacher, Mr. Bates gives us the life-story, or 30 years of it, from 1905 to the present day, of Rosie Perkins, barmaid at the Angel. But even less than Luke, who returned to it, does she stick to her last, deserting quite soon what is for her creator the newer field of the publichouse for the more familiar fields of one of his small family farms. Though at times she looks back regretfully she takes to the farm better than she does to her farmer-husband, and becomes up to a point, when necessity demands, its mainstay, though she cannot rescue it from the effects of that general decay of farming whose causes, and even whose workings, no one in the book ever grasps or as much as glances at. All the characters live simply from day to day, actuated by immediate necessities and hungers of the body, completely unaware of wider or more permanent horizons.

Even within this doubtless realistic limit, Mr. Bates seems to confine himself unduly; though Rosie has a certain rather flashy attractiveness, none of the others has the vitality of the best of his earlier creations. It is a work, underneath its superficial liveliness and abundant minor incident, of hates, resentments, frustrations, and decay, set against the author's accustomed backgrounds with much of his accustomed skill, but unable to escape the depressing nemesis of its basic or anyway final impulses.