

H. E. BATES: *A Crown of Wild Myrtle*. 191pp. Michael Joseph. 15s.

Mr. Forster placed a lower limit for the novel at 50,000 words. In his new story Mr. H. E. Bates has not exceeded 40,000. To judge numerically, then, it is a long short story; to judge by its content, it is a short short one. Beautiful Ruth Forbes is travelling companion to ugly Mrs. Keller, who is older than she. Lesbianism is not once named, but "the relationship between the two women is not merely an uncomfortable one; it has in it something ominous; indeed it is sinister". Handsome Jack Marsden releases Ruth from her bondage. The season is summer; the setting, a Greek island. "August for the people. . . ." What more?