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# *A Tribute to* **MICHAEL JOSEPH**

**By H. E. BATES**

**M**ICHAEL JOSEPH, who has just died, set up his publishing house in Bloomsbury under the sign of the mermaid in 1936, at a time when far too many books were being published and the advertising of them had reached ridiculous proportions. One of his aims was to gamble mostly in fiction and also to publish far fewer books than was then the average, at the same time devoting more personal attention to each, thus saving them from becoming mere merchandise.

But a publisher needs more than these aims to carry him through his first inevitably difficult years. He also needs a stroke or two of good fortune, and there seems little doubt that the discovery of "How Green Was My Valley" and a chance meeting between a member of Michael's staff and a girl named Monica Dickens had a great deal to do with turning early struggle into solid success. These two authors were the forerunners of a large company of novelist best-sellers.

Forester, Joyce Cary, John Masters, Vicki Baum, Doris Lessing and Richard Gordon, it is worth noting that both Forester and Cary had published many books with only moderate success before going to Bloomsbury Street. It was Michael Joseph who put them at the top.

My friendship with him of twenty years was firm, warm and untroubled by a single word of dispute. We had much in common besides a love of fiction and a deep interest in authorship and authors' problems, for which he was constantly campaigning. One of our common enthusiasms was football, at which as a young man he had been good enough to be selected—in mistake for another player of the same name!—for an England Army XI. Cats, horses, fishing, shooting, cricket, wine and the countryside were also among his loves and he could talk of them all with immense personal charm. Publishers have necessarily to be far more than mere purveyors of books and Michael Joseph combined all that a good publisher should have of shrewdness, taste, judgment and courage with all the warmer virtues of humanity.

Among such names as O. S.