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## STORIES BY NOVELISTS.

THE country in "The Heartless Land," by James Stern (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.), is Africa, and these eight stories deal solely with the lives in that country of English settlers, their wives, and the Kaffirs who work for them. With one or two exceptions they are stories of men without women, of the conflict of men against the everlasting heat, solitude, and monotony of African life and against themselves and the pain of living alone with one another; Mr. Stern emphasizes above all the conflict of black against white, Kaffir against Briton, the primitive against the civilized, of darkness against light. In every story he shows us the littleness, pain, unhappiness, and cruelty that comes of one kind of life seeking to oppress another and one race another. In his analysis of these emotions, his understanding of his fellow-men, both black and white, and in the few glimpses he gives us of women, Mr. Stern shows a wonderfully balanced sympathy and detachment, a fine tenderness and irony. He is a writer of both solid power and great delicacy, getting his effect by subtle contrasts of light and shade in feeling and atmosphere. In all of his stories there is something good; and in one or two, such as "The Force," "Outcasts," "Colonel Congreve Esquire," where the grimness of life is softened by feminine influences, there is something melancholy, haunting, and painful.

What Mr. Stern has to say he says always in his own purposefully individual manner. By contrast, whatever Miss Kay Boyle has to say in "A Wedding Day" (Pharos, 6s.) is said in almost everyone else's way and very rarely in her own. More than half these stories seem to be experiments conducted according to the formulæ of other writers, notably those of the Parisian-American school. Miss Boyle's motive in following other people's fashions and forms is inexplicable, since when she comes to write like herself she can do so with far more force and beauty than those she imitates. She has only to stand on her own feet in order to be a writer of some significance.

Mr. Mottram, unlike Miss Boyle, is always content to be himself, consistently honest, sincere, quietly ironic. He is not a writer who lets off crackers, and none of the pieces in "Through the Menin Gate" (Chatto and Windus, 6s.) can be called brilliant. Nevertheless, they cannot be mistaken for another man's work. The longest piece, "A Personal Rescue," has appeared before; the rest are strictly not stories, but brief memoirs, more in essay than fictional form, of the war in France. Mr. Mottram has still no illusions about war; and if he still hates soldiering he can still write with sympathy, understanding, and humour of the common soldier.

H. E. BATES.