

THE COUNTRY HEART. By H. E. Bates.
Michael Joseph. 12s. 6d.

WHEN a first-rate novelist deigns to travel honestly in the inferior country of the reporter, the reader obtains not only the letter of the law, but also the spirit. It would be difficult to find a more successful expedition of this kind than that of Mr. H. E. Bates in *The Country Heart*.

This volume contains two books, *O More than Happy Countryman* and *The Heart of the Country*, two collections of essays that have been out of print for far too long. They have now been revised and amended by the author, and charmingly illustrated by John Minton. The result is a book to buy and to keep for re-reading, for it contains some of the best country thinking of our time.

Although he was playing his part as a useful cog in the hideous machine of war, Mr. Bates found time to watch carefully its effect on what appeared to be the one stable thing in a world of uncertainty, the land of his own country. "Never know there was a bloody war on, would you?" says the sergeant who accompanied him on fishing expeditions. Yet the point is made that this same sergeant, who thinks he is fighting to destroy the power of Hitler, will probably succeed in destroying the power of the big house in the village.

Here, then, is faithful reporting and fair comment set down in fine prose. Here is no twisting the big thing, the countryside, to suit the little thing, the writer's ideas; but an Englishman admiring and loving and criticizing what he knows to be his nation's most precious possession, the countryside and its people. Here is a great novelist content—oh, so content, to be a humble fisherman, a parish councillor, a gentle gardener, a good countryman. Here indeed is quality stuff.

A. G. STREET.