

THE COUNTRY HEART,
by H. E. Bates (Michael
Joseph, 12s. 6d.).

THIS book should be
bought, devoured
and cherished by every
Englishman not living
in his native country,
and by every non-Eng-
lishman who wants to
know something about
that land.

Literally land, for the
book is a series of essays on
the countryside, written
with all the charm and deli-
cacy of the subject.

These essays were written
during the war, when the
Kentish earth for which Mr.
Bates has such love was
shaking with the impacts of
bombs and crashed aircraft.

They were, in effect, an
outpouring of escapism in
the best sense of that word.
The horrors in the sky shar-
pened the perceptions for
the beauties and wonders of
the world below.

Mr. Bates is an author
with a great and just re-
putation for fine, restrained
writing; his work is like a
cool spring, quietly bubbling
and occasionally flashing
brilliantly in the sunlight.
But I cannot think of any
other book of his which so
completely satisfies as this
one.



Passages of breath-taking
descriptive power are clever-
ly inter-twined with delict-
ious character studies, such
as Mr. Pimpkins, the inde-
pendent handy-man, and
the little girl evacuee who
startled the village by cat-
ching large fish from a pond
where no fish were thought
to live.

Mr. Bates' mind roams
over much of England, but
it is in Kent that he is hap-
piest, particularly that area
known as the Weald (and
there can be few lovelier
places in the world.)

It has, says Mr. Bates....
downland and marsh, for-
est and heath, corn and
hops, river and woodland
pond and pasture, churches
and castles, ports and the
sea. Its orchards are in-
comparable. It grows
everything, from the prim-
roses which are like moon-
light on every roadside in
spring to the quinces which
glow like the golden deco-
rations of Christmas-trees
in the Wealden gardens in
autumn, with rich loveli-
ness.

The book has a number of
tasteful drawings by John
Minton.

R.W.B.