

Mr. H. E. Bates uses natural description sometimes contrapuntally, sometimes as an end in itself. At first *Love for Lydia* looks like a short story breaking under the weight of description. Everything is seen and everything is described in detail. However, once the reader has become attuned to the measured movement of the narrative and understands that the setting is to receive the amount of space more often accorded to it in a travel-book than in a novel, the thoroughness of the exploration begins to fascinate. We do not want to rush on to the catastrophe or happy ending, but are content to study the Midland valley—half industrial township, half derelict parkland—and to follow it through the seasons and the years. Mr. Bates is a cooler Lawrence, who with a disciplined restraint works in the territory that Lawrence took over from his master Meredith. For some tastes the landscape will be too lush and clotted; but then the English landscape is lush. Of the two traditions in English fiction, the lush and the lean, Mr. Bates strongly prefers the lush for his landscapes; but his love-story has a controlled bareness that somehow enables him to combine the continuous interest of the folk-tale with the investigation of complex relationships that modern taste expects from fiction.