Tales in Somber Vein

"The Daffodil Sky," by H. E. Bates *(Little, Brown. 256 pp. $3.50), a new collection of short pieces by an adept storyteller, features a number that are concerned with man's failure to achieve love and understanding.*

By William Peden

IN HIS new collection of short stories entitled "The Daffodil Sky" H. E. Bates demonstrates once again that he is as competent and entertaining as any living English writer. Equally adept with the character sketch, the expanded incident, or the fully plotted story, the author of "The Purple Plain," "Colonel Julian," and many other books of first-rate fiction continues to write with a finesse which must be the despair of some of his contemporaries.

Many of these essentially bleak stories are concerned with a man's failure to achieve love and understanding. The protagonist of the title story begins to live only after his chance encounter, outside a rain-drenched pub, with a lusty young woman "full of the uncanny instinct of the blood." He is a likable individual, this young grower of daffodils. On the surface he is a reasonably disciplined, not ungentle, human being. Basically, however, he is uncertain, afraid, and capable of great violence; tragedy is his destiny as he gropes his halting way through a world he never comprehends. This kind of semi-primitive man appears often in Mr. Bates's stories. His physical competence only underscores his essential loneliness and vulnerability. He feels with the blood, as it were, and the blood—as stories like "The Daffodil Sky" or "The Good Corn" or "Roman Figures" suggest—can betray or save with equal indifference.

Mr. Bates's intellectuals are, similarly, battlegrounds of warring impulses and conflicting emotions. Characteristic is the young Englishman of "Across the Bay," whose existence suddenly becomes meaningful because of his love affair with a French girl. He is "smitten" with gray loneliness. . . . . He felt sickened by people. He wanted no one near him but the girl, on the burning shore or in the calm darkness." But he cannot give himself to her completely. Like the detached traveler of "Third View on the Reichenbach" or the mildly psychotic officer of "A Place in the Heart," he asks for more than he is capable of giving; if he receives less than he needs it is, perhaps, as much as he deserves. They have had it, these men, in one way or another, because of the war or fatigue or some congenital inability to accept life as it is. In their emptiness they are more akin to Eliot's hollow men than their semi-primitive counterparts are to D. H. Lawrence's men of the blood.

In somewhat less serious vein Mr. Bates has created a remarkable group of people, pleasant, not so pleasant, and definitely unpleasant: a sex-conscious mother contemplating the disturbing fact that her daughters have become fully developed, inviting, and complicated young women; two old maids with their paragon of a manservant; a corpulent, violin-playing coffin maker on a Sunday afternoon.

Even more than his great technical skill, his effective evocation of a sense of place, or his virtuosity as a teller of tales, this expert delineation of character is the source of much of Mr. Bate's success. It can be said of him, as Arnold Bennett said of himself, that he comes neither to scoff nor to patronize, but to comprehend. Perhaps, in these days, we have no right to ask any more of an author.

Aerial Death Dance

"The Last Squadron," by Gerd Gaiser *(translated by Paul Finley. Pantheon. 251 pp. $3.50), is a fictional presentation of the air war as seen from the German side.*

By Daniel S. Dodson

GERMAN books on World War II, translations of which are appearing in increasing numbers in this country, seem to fall into two broad categories: the apologetic *mea culpa* of those who fought while struggling with their consciences, and the unabashedly belligerent declarations of a National Socialism secretly undefeated in spirit. One is likely to suspect that the first are tempered by historical perspective, while shuddering over the *Blut und Ehre* of unregenerated fanaticism in the second.

In "The Last Squadron" Gerd Gaiser has obviously chosen to elect a less controversial approach. Mr. Gaiser has drawn on his experiences in the Luft-

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

SECOND AND THIRD GENERATIONS

Nan Cooke Carpenter of Missoula, Mont., asks you to identify the following people in families where genius and fame have struck more than once. Answers on page 36.

1. Prototype of his own Colonel Sartoris, the great-grandfather of Mississippi's first citizen (literarily speaking) wrote "The White Rose of Memphis," a melodramatic novel.

2. Daughter of an illustrious doctor of music, organist, and first real historian of music in England, this Dresser to the Queen (whose duties included mixing Her Majesty's snuff) left a diary full of lively details about the Jonsonian circle and a famous novel about a "Young Lady's Entrance Into the World."

3. Erstwhile lecturer at Princeton, this German romanticist and Nobel Prize-winner continued to produce tales of decadence and death while his daughter (wife of W. H. Auden) has concentrated chiefly on political works.

4. The mother of this British post-office official (whose "Autobiography" described his system of producing a constant stream of novels) is better known for her (in this country) offensive "Domestic Manners of the Americans" than for her forty-odd novels.

5. Daughter of an English poet laureate (who accepted only when assured that no official verse would be required and whose only such poem was probably written by his son-in-law), thought to be a harmonious blending of the personalities of his wife and sister, his "joy and sunshine" published "A Journal of a Few Months' Residence in Portugal."

6. The mother of a famous eccentric, poet, esthete, and prison reformer (dressed as a girl until five years old because of his mother's disappointment in hopes of a daughter) wrote Irish ballads under the pen name Speranza and kept up a sprightly salon in Dublin.

7. Although she began with didactic stories for children (imbued with ideas on society and education obtained largely from her father, author of an "Essay on Irish Bulls" and "Practical Education") her "Castle Rackrent" is considered one of the best historical novels before Scott.

8. Famous father of a more famous daughter, he was the "conversationalist" among the transcendentalists and the sponsor of an egregious failure, Fruitlands, while she stabilized the family fortunes with the publication in 1868 of a classic among girls' books.