

Mr. Bates provides the contemporary reader with some of the pleasures of professionalism that an older generation gained from Mr. Maugham. His weaknesses are a liking for lushness in personal relations and a preoccupation with new ways of describing twigs. He is not an intellectual, theoretical, moral writer but almost entirely a sensuous one. His great strength is unfashionable curiosity. Nobody else can tell a poorish story so masterfully, gripping the reader's attention by the force of his own passionate interest in people and places, in the world outside himself. These four long-short stories are set in a seaside garrison town, the Italian lakes, a fruit-growing district in England, and Tahiti. Each of them is a bit like some other story one has read; each of them contains some completely original event or relationship or observation.