

a hungry search for tradition; but they are only neat little machines, rather sad.

Jesse Hill Ford's collection is equally facile—rustic tales of the Deep South, the title taken from Ecclesiastes. "To the Open Water" has been described as "one of the great hunting stories of recent years". It is good that America publishes so many short stories; but the fact that there are enough "hunting stories" to make this remark meaningful illustrates the truth that it is possible for writers to be published too easily. This one ends with the sportsman drowning, and watching his prey up above him:

The ducks came up and began wheeling and circling above him. Their curved wings were more beautiful than any he had seen before, cupping as gently as a kiss, skimming like a long caress, each pair shaped like the touch of a woman's hands in love.

This quite efficient prose is really too easy to write. The nearest British equivalent is, perhaps, H. E. Bates—fluent, acceptable, never surprising. He offers four neat stories, containing many passages which (like Jesse Hill Ford's above) are, really, variations on "Far off a dog barked". "The Chords of Youth" is a humor-

ous story about an elderly lady trying to recapture old ties with Germany—"living again some long-uncaptured moment of Teutonic romance, gentian-starred, listening to a thousand-belled peal of soldanellas between summer meadows and summer snow . . .". This sounds as if the author is parodying the woman's feelings, but the difference between her poeticizing and the author's is not easy to see.

After such unfeeling neatness, the enthusiastic struggles of James Jones can be better appreciated. Not that he is clumsy in the thirteen stories collected in *The Ice-Cream Headache* (as he often is in his novels) but it is evident that he is working hard to express things he finds difficult to say. There are brief prefaces which may seem egoistic, but will interest those who know his work—and might even want the forewords to be longer. The best story, perhaps, is the one most reminiscent of *From Here to Eternity*: a First Sergeant, very like Warden, dominates a convincing and deeply-felt account of battle experience. But there is equal feeling in the less "predictable" stories of childhood which are emotional, but not guilty of the sentimentality of which he seems to suspect himself.