

any rate in a way which would show some of the interplay of personalities and interests inevitable in the running of so huge a concern. Ann Pinchot has not done this; her characters draw their salaries from the store and work there during eight hours of the twenty-four, but she is interested in them only as they live during the other sixteen. Their experiences and misadventures are entertaining enough, but certainly do not come up to a standard sufficiently high to justify the publishers' comparison with Vicki Baum.

The form Miss Pinchot has chosen to use again calls for comparison, unfortunately unfavorable, with another novelist. The middle section of the book is a sort of collection of short stories, giving the previous histories of her more important characters; the first and last sections deal with these people as they were on the opening day of Marks Brothers' new store on Fifth Avenue, and on the anniversary of that day a year later. Throughout, they appear on the scene and disappear again in a contrapuntal manner slightly reminiscent of Aldous Huxley; yet as their actions involve outsiders without in any way affecting one another, they lack that necessary and inevitable relationship which gives reality and body to Huxley's form.

In spite of these objections, Miss Pinchot's work shows real ability along certain lines; she apparently has vivid imagination and a faculty for seeing and describing character clearly and a little cruelly. In this book her work suffers, in fact, from embarrassment of riches; it would have been infinitely more effective could she have confined herself to one or two of her creations and treated them more fully—the buyer, Berthe, for instance, and her parasitical family, or the old beauty-loving Jew, Moses Marks. The author evidently has a firm belief that "it's love that makes the world go round"; she should avoid the abuse of dots and of the word "sense" for "feel."

A Factory Town

CHARLOTTE'S ROW. By H. E. Bates. 271 pp. New York: Cape & Smith. \$2.

MR. BATES'S new novel is a kind of "Street Scene" in an English factory town. The people who live in Charlotte's Row, a street in the slum quarter of the town, make up a little world of their own—a representative yet, as Mr. Bates describes it, an individualized world. One feels that however tangled and undernourished they may be, these people have

roots. There is a sense of permanence about the row—perhaps it is no more than the permanence of poverty, but it exists. There is Quintus Harper, the drinking, spending, hard-up shoemaker with his gaunt sons, his unobtrusive wife, his pregnant widowed daughter and his unmarried daughter Pauline. Further up the row lives Masher Jonatahn, a free-thinking, socialistic shopkeeper married to a wife he detests; in the other direction lives a little boy named Adam, who works for Harper, and Adam's grandmother, an old woman who dies at the end of the story.

Thus compactly—for there are really no other characters—has Mr. Bates peopled his scene. These comparatively few people merge and intermingle in family and personal relationships, enacting life, birth, death, hate, and love and friendship. Most of the drama of the story concerns the passionate love of Masher Jonatahn and Pauline, their coming together, their living together, their going away together. The subject is handled with a convincing forthrightness. It all happens simply and inevitably, not so much to two predestined lovers as to two people aching for freedom. To Pauline, both her life at home and her life in the factory are horrible. To Masher, seeing more deeply into things as he grows older, and hating his avaricious, mean-souled wife, rebellion is imperative. So the two go off to London; and presently Pauline comes back. It is all over; we are not told just why, but we do not need to be.

It is in the portrait of the boy Adam, however, that Mr. Bates has done a more original thing. There is something curiously moving about the youngster: not because he is pathetic or unhappy or ill-treated or ill-adjusted, for he is none of these things, and not because his life gives promise of being tragic. It is rather because here, without a trace of mawkishness or special pleading, we see the eyes of childhood at once innocent and knowing, regarding the only life they can call their own and, without grasping that life, accepting it. Adam comes very close without being very real to us. Mr. Bates has left him typical; has left him unexplored. By doing so (though it could scarcely have been his intention) he has left him veiled in a kind of childhood secrecy, and that secrecy unexpectedly touches us.

The other characters, though not quite three-dimensional, add to the realism and vigor of the picture. We may not know them, but we see them, hear them, smell them. And Mr. Bates has made us see and hear and smell vividly: the loud, bully-

ing, crazy-drunk Harper in his shop stinking of leather; the screeching Mrs. Jonatahn, the one-eyed Harper son at table with the rest of the family in the greasy, disordered kitchen; Adam's yellow-gray grandmother cooking and sewing by the light of a single candle. This is all genre stuff, to be sure; but in the prose of "Charlotte's Row" it becomes fresh and real again. In contrast to it the fields and woods where Pauline and Masher tryst are given—as all talented English writers give them—their due of brightness and softness and freshness. Nor does the contrast seem forced. There is no facile sentimental talk about these poor people needing their "breath of beauty": they go to nature partly because it is their English heritage to love it, partly because they have nowhere else to go.

Mr. Bates writes well in an unaffected, not particularly distinctive way. What is most ingratulating about him is his scrupulous faithfulness to what he sees and feels. He seems almost conventional at times because he refuses, not merely to exaggerate, but to emphasize. His understanding of life is still youthful and, at times, unformed; and for passion (which he lacks) he can only offer simplicity as a substitute. But he seems to have deliberately refused to fall back for help, like most writers who portray a slice of life, upon clever use of detail, minute descriptions of rooms and shop windows and neighborhood customs and taboos. He aims at something fresher and larger. He does not quite succeed, but he does not altogether fail, and "Charlotte's Row" is worth reading.

The Inside Story

THE TRIAL OF GREGOR KASKA. By Fred Andrews. 278 pp. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$2.

THIS novel, translated from the German by Winifred Ray, is quite different from the usual run of mystery stories. It deals with the trial of an opera singer for the murder of a university professor, but interspersed between the chapters dealing with the trial are other chapters which gradually reveal to the reader what newspaper men would call the inside story. Gregor Kaska, charged with shooting Dr. Guenther Drau in the latter's study, first denies all knowledge of the shooting. Later, confronted by overwhelming evidence against him, he declares that Drau shot himself in his (Kaska's) presence. He refuses to tell what passed during his interview with Drau or to throw any light on the