

*The Fallovo Land* is much the best piece of work which Mr. Bates has done ; and that means that it is very good indeed. It is the story of a woman's struggle against the land, conducted with courage and independence of spirit in the face of obstacles, losses, and betrayals, and of the land's ultimate indifferent victory. Deborah married into the land, and fought it with a perseverance far greater than those in the story who were born to it. Her husband left her, her father-in-law died, one of her sons was killed in the War, the other survived but went the way of his father. Finally, Jess came back, was accepted by Deborah, and re-took possession of the farm which for so many years he had done nothing to maintain. When Deborah died, the victory of the land was complete.

Mr. Bates starts his story uncertainly, with a few chapters

which give us a picture of Jess but do not develop it. These early chapters are rather thin in texture, and Mr. Bates' imagination does not always carry their scenes to a conclusion. For example, the fight between Jess and the boxer is convincing enough until its sudden end, in which we do not believe, simply because it is thrust upon us baldly in such a way as to be technically improbable. Once Deborah is in the farm, however, the story settles into its stride, and there is no faltering of any kind. It is full, satisfying, written with knowledge, and abounding in passages of real beauty which are not interpolated but flower naturally in their context. *The Fallow Land* carries Mr. Bates a step forward, and marks him as one of a handful who can write of the country with grace and with authority.