to what purpose . . . it would interest me to know': an immediate feeling for reality which has the effect of a grim humour - Hall the Icelander is carried overboard in the storm and washed in again: he said, 'It is not much better here than it was out there, but still I am glad to be with my friends again.' Kol's grief for a friend makes Skallagrim say, 'No one dies of another man's wound': a simplicity even in cunning - 'Kol answered, 'A man can always tell lies at night'.' The roots of some things in the English character are twisted with these.

The climax of the book is the Skua's long voyage south, from Orkney to England, and the fight that comes at the end of it. The account of this voyage - nearly a quarter of the whole book - is a magnificent piece of writing, and to be added to the great sea-pieces in our literature. And the fight is flesh and blood on the dry bones of Anglo-Saxon verse. It would be worth while giving it to students to read alongside their Beowulf. There is something I want to know. Did they or did they not come ashore, after that voyage, in the very place where I write this? It must be Whitby - that sandbar across the river has overturned a fleet of boats since, and those burnt stone ruins would be the first abbey, destroyed by Danes between 867 and 870. And the charred timber of a small town below the dead abbey - Whitby, or I'm not a Whitby woman.

These Shall Endure
by Winifred Holtby

When Mr. Bates wrote The Two Sisters, that first novel was remarkable for qualities of lyrical imagination and nervous intensity. Its characters moved in a dream-like world of sensations, emotions, and fine-drawn filaments of intuitive perception. Natural beauty was there, in the river, the garden and the shadow-haunted house. But the family lived in legendary isolation. The dead mother with her remembered violin, the mad father, the brothers, and the two lonely girls, moved untramelled by the hard impersonal world of material circumstance, and the occasional mention of shops and warehouses broke oddly into their enchanted river-side domain. Even when Tessa went away, her eighteen-months' adventure drew her no closer to the external and social life of the community. Hartington might be in Heaven or on Wuthering Heights or surrounding Childe Roland's dark tower, for all its connection with the workaday world.

In that remoteness, that fairy-tale lyricism lay the strength and the weakness of Mr. Bates' early work. But recently he has been opening his eyes with comprehension instead of closing them with sensitive repulsion, when confronted by the world's harsh texture of reality. And his writing has gained in strength. For though man cannot live on bread alone, and novels cannot live on facts alone, without bread we starve, and without facts, novels fade off in unsubstantial moods and ecstasies. It is in the conflict between man's perceptive spirit and

*The Fallow Land.* A novel by H. E. Bates. (Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. net)
the hard stuff of circumstance that true

drama lies, and our minds cannot retain
the memory of the spirit without
adequate recognition of its imprisoning
matter.

The Fallow Land has advanced far
beyond The Two Sisters because in it
the human emotions and perceptions
are strongly rooted in material circum-
stance. Mr. Bates has worked from
within outwards, and his achievements
are justifying his method.

The story is simple and tragic. The
theme is man's struggle with the soil
from which he wrests a precarious
livelihood. The period covered is from
the end of the nineteenth century, when
servant girls were thankful to receive
five shillings a week all found, and young
farmers won prize-money in fairs, up-
till the post-war era of tractors and
motor buses. The heroine, Deborah,
the sturdy, sensible, courageous servant
girl, meets Jess Mortimer at a fair,
maries him, and goes to the unending
labour of a fifty-acre farm.

Mr. Bates knows that farm. But
it is more than a marked area. It is
in some way a symbol of British
agriculture. When the old Mortimers
worked the small-holding before she
married, their meagre, laborious life
typified the whole fashion and measure
of peasant agriculture. Her mastery
and extension of the farm, the acquisi-
tion of the Twelvetree holding, and the
prosperity of the war-time and imme-
diate post-war period, coincide with
the farming boom which led agricul-
turists to think that this harvest time
might last for ever. And the downfall
of Benjamin, whose gay, truculent
enterprise began with motor tractors
and an urban wife, and ended with
bailiffs and a motor bus, might stand
for a hundred major and minor trage-
dies over which the old people shake
their heads to-day.

So the return of Jess borrows from
larger experience a quality of pathos
and sorrow almost heroic in its sim-

plicity.

'Run times,' he said.

'Yes.'

'What are we coming to?'

'I'm sure I don't know.'

'Won't ever be the same again, will
it?'

She shook her head. The conversa-
tion faltered and silence returned. . . .

To her relief he spoke once more.

'Land's in a poor way,' he said.

'The land's all right,' she said
quickly. 'It's the people on it. The
land's still the same as ever.'

As in his earlier books, Mr. Bates
writes a serene and measured prose.
His eye is alert for natural beauties, the
fall of snow, the harvest fields, the
village fair. But here is a richer enjoy-
ment of human relationships. As usual,
Mr. Bates must introduce some aspect
of eccentricity; the Twelvetree house-
hold is nearly as queer as the home of
his Two Sisters. But the war scenes, the
pressure brought upon David before he
enlists, the decadence of Benjamin, and
the sense of neighbourliness round the
Mortimers' holding, plants the farm
solidly in its rural surroundings.

If there is still in his work a faint
lethargy of composition, a sense of
eviction about his more dramatic scenes,
even these faults are less conspicuous
than in the former novels. He is now
apparently writing with his intellect as
well as with his nerves and his emotions.
And from the quality of apprehended
and controlled experience comes the
sense of universal and undying values, of
those things which endure beyond the
changing face of human history.