

**The Feast of July.** H. E. Bates. *Michael Joseph, 10/6*

This is a Victorian melodrama told in a tone of Georgian placidity, with the background of Midland river valleys and shoemaking townlets carefully described in Mr. Bates's individual style. Mr. Bates knows what he can do and does it with justifiably proud craftsmanship. Even his most violent plots move with a dignified sobriety. Though he is generally classed among the better disciples of Lawrence, he has some kinship with the rural, folk-landscape side of George Eliot.

A betrayed barmaid leaves her coastal pub and journeys inland to look for her seducer. A family of shoemakers takes her in and the three sons fall in love with her. An explosive situation is turned into an explosion by the reappearance of the seducer. In other words, the plot is the familiar nineteenth-century story of feminine courage and perseverance; but where the older novelists set it in a landscape described only by lumps of formal and meaningless description, Mr. Bates sets it in a scene he feels so sharply that the human passions pale into formality.

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