

NEW SHORT STORIES

The Watercress Girl. H. E. Bates.
Michael Joseph, 13/6

"Big bells dinged in the foggy rain. A great bridge, scalded black at the edges, went over a street, and it was dark under the bridge except for the blue sparks of tram-wires . . ." There you have it at once, the swift, jabbing style of the true short story; and this collection marks another welcome return to the real mastery which Mr. Bates's proficiency and versatility (along with the size of his output) have tended to obscure. These stories are all concerned with an adult world (of forty or fifty years ago) seen through a child's eye. But beyond that they have plenty of variety, and of course colour. Unequal they may be—the first in the book, yet another evocation of May-time, skims close to self-parody: and Mr. Bates's comic types often seem to have bounced straight out of a mural by Stanley Spencer. But at their best—and the longest is the best of the lot—these stories combine speed and visual sharpness with real depth of feeling.

— D. P.