

Joseph Bates (H.E.'s maternal great-uncle)

(1842-1912)

Joseph was the eldest brother to H.E.'s grandmother, Deborah. He witnessed Deborah's death certificate and may have been the closest contact Albert had to his dead mother, as described in the story [The Far Distant Journey](#).

[The Ship](#) and [The Far Distant Journey](#) are both set in Joseph's taxidermist shop.

Joseph kept a taxidermist shop in Higham Ferrers: J. Bates, Taxidermist, Butterflies Mounted. In [Flowers and Faces](#) H.E. described Joseph as a myth: *'although I never saw the man I saw the shop; and the shop was the man. I still see it as I saw it in my boyhood when my father and mother and I went out of the evening darkness and rain into the little stone-flagged shop with the gas-light turned down to a blue-bead of flame in the street window. A long gloomy passage led down to the back living room, and while we waited there for the door to open and the lamp-light to shine through I could feel the stuffed jays and owls and pike and foxes staring down at me from the walls in that strange gas-blue lamp twilight. There was something monastic about that shop. It occurs to me now that Joseph must even then have been dead. For he was never in the shop and never in the back living-room, a room which seemed even then to have come out of the past, with its faded varnished wall-paper, the kettle eternally on the hob, and the countless cases of butterflies, as wonderful to me now as they were then.'*