

THE STORY WITHOUT AN END

In two short stories **THE STORY WITHOUT AN END** and **THE COUNTRY DOCTOR** (White Owl Press, 5s. net) Mr. H. E. Bates displays once again his mastery of the lyrical short story. He sees life as suffering shot with beauty, both equal blossoms of a common earth compounded of time and circumstance and human nature. The first tale tells of a young French boy come to a fifth-rate Soho restaurant to learn the trade of waiter; he is bullied by the brutal, terrifying proprietor, but finds an unexpected consolation in the friendly charm of Yvette, the Breton girl in the cash-desk. But the taper of love and pity—it is scarcely more—that burns up between them is hastily stamped out by their vindictive employer, and poor Pierre returned to the ranks of "the oppressed and persecuted, of those who cannot escape." The second story is shorter and even slighter. An elderly lady buys at a country auction sale, and for an extravagant price, a pair of sporting guns as a memento of her late friend the local doctor, their deceased owner; she takes them home and hides them away. Each of these stories might easily have been simply sentimental; neither is. Mr. Bates's understanding of the human heart is too certain, as also his control of his medium; his detail is always right, as his action is never forced. These stories may be slight in magnitude, but they are, within their limits, wholly satisfying.
