



H. E. BATES: Published his first novel in 1925 when he was twenty and since then has had a fairly large output. His real forte, however, is the short story, about which he wrote a textbook. During the war wrote very successfully under the pseudonym 'Flying Officer X'.

neath, good and bad. And not least in a remarkable feat of compression in the author's exhibition of wry humour.

Though greatly admired in her native Norway, Cora Sandel is not well enough known here. Since Peter Owen continues to charge so outrageously for his books, it is a comfort to know that this particular author is well worth overpricing.

H. E. Bates needs no introduction from anyone. The list of his works, compressed into a minute type-face, fills a page with short stories, novels, essays, flowing as endlessly as words from his facile pen. It seems impossible now for him to write anything which is not typical of H. E. Bates, yet within these four novellas we see variations of style, character and setting. Bitterness, in the lonely sea marshes, as a young man unwittingly pulls apart the last strands in a disintegrating marriage. Violence: a handful of characters wearing at each other on a festering Pacific island. Comedy, almost farce, when eccentric Aunt Leonora entertains an unpredictable German notary (less successful, and the only one of the four not a 'beauty').

Best of all, the title story of a young man's friendship with a family, and his love affairs with all three sisters, a quite charming and effortless tale, brought to its conclusion by a beautiful coda. This is redolent of the best in Bates; not one for

neat plotting, content merely to suggest the outline of a smooth running narrative, delicate evoker of adolescence; and purveyor of a unique brand of sadness.

If the familiar prose just occasionally seems a little ingenuous, it also provides the collector of similes with treasures like this one, describing a fat wastrel in the Pacific story as he heaved himself towards the door, to emerge like an obese, blanched maggot hunching itself from the dark core of a rotten fruit, half blinded by sunshine'.

Down under Roger Baker

THOMAS KENEALLY

Bring Larks and Heroes. Cassell Australia, 30s.

GEORGE TURNER

The Lame Dog Man. Cassell Australia, 30s.

Arriving together, these two novels give the impression that Australia is making a thumping great stand for literary independence, demanding a literary identity of its own. This is fair enough and—bearing in mind Australia's growing significance politically—fully understandable. Even so, it does seem rather like building worn steps into a new university — instant heritage. That Keneally and Turner sat down self-consciously to write *A Great Australian Novel* seems unlikely; but this is the alienating effect the publishers achieve and is probably unfair. It just ain't possible to produce an Australian novel like that.

Keneally attempts the boldest national statement, and by any standards *Bring Larks and Heroes* is a striking piece of work, though initially hard to get on with. This is because Keneally has adopted an over-wrought style, laden with conceits and preciosity such as describing sounds in visual terms rather like early Edith Sitwell. The intention is clear, for geography and physical conditions play a crucial part in the novel and must, in some way, be heightened.

For Keneally goes back to Australia's roots, to a British penal colony in the late 18th century placed, it appears, where Sydney stands now. The felons are full of wisdom, of course, and rich humanity; the guarding soldiers are corrupt or lazy; the officials tediously enclosed in cocoons of duty and hung about with appalling wives. Corporal Phelim Halloran is sensitive, a touch naïve, partly educated, and the novel defines the effect on him of love for a servant girl which ultimately distances him from the army, from comrades, from