

an almost awe-inspiring beginning.

The transformation of the author of *The Kimono* and other memorable short stories into the ghastly retching vulgarian of *The Darling Buds of May* was an immeasurably depressing phenomenon. In the four novellas of *The Four Beauties* Mr Bates is more readable and less pleased with himself; but little more can be said. The writing is as dead as the impulse that prompted it, and Mr Bates's wistful but mechanical parody of his early manner makes sad reading.