

CHARLOTTE'S ROW. By H. E. BATES.
Cape & Ballou, 1931. \$2.

Mr. Bates has a most unusual flair for sensing and creating personality. We have had enough work from his pen by now to know that it is not merely one particular type that he can do, nor even one particular type of types. As he adds figure after figure to his gallery it becomes increasingly apparent that the man, woman, or child he selects for presentation will be set down complete, from the clear physical outlines to the shadowy peripheral margins of personality. Because Mr. Bates writes such fluent and beautiful English and creates so perfectly the scenes through which his stories slowly move, these attributes have been rather overemphasized by critics at the expense of his characterization. The style and the setting are not to be denied, but they come after and grow out of the people they serve. His men and women, or, one should say, women and men, since that seems their relative importance in Mr. Bates's work, come bringing their dark or glowing backgrounds with them, but they come first.

In "Charlotte's Row" it is a little boy through whom the brutality, occasionally beauty glinted, of an English slum is seen. This is an ugly place where ugly things occur, a frightful place for any child to be, and yet so consistently is the boy's limited, sensitive point of view maintained that it is never the story but only what the story is about that touches sordidness. Circumscribed but perfectly proportioned, the book is like a tiny tragic miniature.