

and contains a specially interesting section on the puppet-theatre. *Death in the Afternoon*, by Ernest Hemingway (Cape. 15s.), is concerned with the noble art of bull-fighting, as it affects the literary sensitiveness of an American storyteller. Mr. Hemingway has an enviable descriptive gift, which he employs—though intermittently—to great purpose.

FICTION

By BRIAN ROBERTS

In the years after the War 'nature' was out of fashion: the contrast between quiet and excitement was too great to be easily accepted, and both in literature and in life anything that was of importance was staged in the city. Now, at last, there has begun a re-discovery of the country and of country life, and the same tendency that has produced the rather pathetic activity known as 'hiking' has made the peasant once more acceptable to the novelist. Most important, perhaps, of the novels which have followed this is Mr. H. E. Bates' *The Fallow Land* (Cape. 7s. 6d.); Mr. Bates has not indulged in a return to nature in the old sense of the phrase, and he draws a distinction between the earth, which, he says, is something vague, primitive, and poetic, and the land, which is a composite force of actual, living, everyday things, an opponent and a master. His novel, in fact, is a re-telling of the epic struggle between man and the land from which he with difficulty wrings a livelihood. Deborah Loveday marries a farmer's son, who leaves her to carry on the struggle alone, and amid the sights and sounds of the countryside her unimportant life

gradually assumes heroic proportions until, even in her final defeat, she becomes a personification of humanity, while remaining an individual character such as only an artist could create. Mr. Bates writes of the land without sensationalism and without sentimentality, and his detached but observant attitude emphasizes the relentless tragedy of his story. *The Fallow Land* is not only his longest work, but his most impressive.

Miss Ena Limebeer has a similar, but less sensitive, insight into country people than Mr. Bates, but possesses nothing like the same intense feeling for the country itself. *The Dove and Roebuck* (Dent. 6s.) shows the effect on a village community of a woman who ignores and tramples on the accepted standards of the village. The placid rural scene is transformed by her violent advent, and, intoxicated with her own vitality, she has the effect of strong drink on those with whom she comes in contact. The painful return to sobriety is skilfully depicted; but it is a pity that Miss Limebeer should have drawn an explicit parallel between Louisa Burton and the Lorelei: it introduces an element of melodrama which upsets the balance of her book, and prevents the whole from being taken as seriously as many parts of it deserve.

Four other novels worthy of mention deal wholly or largely with country or village life. In *They Were Defeated* (Collins. 8s. 6d.), Miss Rose Macaulay has deserted satire for historical fiction on a large scale, and her urbanity and wit are embedded in the results of her detailed research into seventeenth-century England. Her story concerns the poet Herrick, and the group surrounding him in his Devonshire parish, and she has attempted to use no words, phrases or idioms