

- The Poacher.** By H. E. Bates. (Cape. 7s. 6d.)  
**A London Story.** By George Buchanan. (Constable. 7s. 6d.)  
**The Epic Makers.** By Paul Morand. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. (Lovat Dickson. 7s. 6d.)  
**A House Divided.** By Pearl S. Buck. (Methuen. 7s. 6d.)

THERE must be very few novelists of Mr. H. E. Bates's generation (he is, I believe, barely thirty) who have a more genuine talent or one that has been more carefully and successfully cultivated. In his new novel, *The Poacher*, one is chiefly struck by his sincere, spontaneous, and constant affection for certain kinds of people and their environment, and by the steadiness and finish of his craftsmanship. It is a pastoral novel designed to show, chiefly in the life history of one individual, the transition that has taken place in the country during the last 50 years from an "old, physical, swaggering, drunken, brawling mode of life, glamorous but wasteful," to the suburbanized existence of today. The whole story is admirably natural and unforced. Mr. Bates's strength lies partly in his contentment to be lyrical; without making any attempt to manufacture a saga, he conveys very well the lapse of time, the inroads of respectability, and a nostalgia for the past. There is no tiresome intrusion of period detail and no banyan-like family tree to tease the docile reader; there are no nagging reminders that we are in the Bates country. All is cool and fresh and grave, like an unspoiled English landscape—not that the story lacks passages of drama and bucolic warmth, since it deals to some extent with the excitements of poaching. In his clarity, and in his acknowledgement of the physical, Mr. Bates seems to owe a good deal to D. H. Lawrence, but he has none of Lawrence's intensity and violence, nor does he show signs of having adopted Lawrence's peculiar philosophy. In his drawing of character, as in the actual texture of his writing, we are never jarred or deceived: on the other hand, we are never startled by a familiar truth or faced with any momentous new one, nor are we led to explore any special complexities of human nature or society. Mr. Bates is not a prophet or visionary, but an English watercolourist, painting his chosen subjects with skill and taste and good feeling, and in his chosen field he probably has few rivals. *The Poacher* is carefully composed and quietly coloured; due attention is paid to proportion and perspective; and there is considerable delicacy in the detail, for Mr. Bates will notice the colour of rain-water in a hare's footprints or the sound of chickens' beaks tapping against the bowl that contains their food. A gentle melancholy pervades the book, and is fitting to the story: in fiction, as well as in reality, the countryside is rapidly disappearing or changing character, and Mr. Bates's melancholy is here that of one engaged not in preserving but in looking back upon an aspect of rural England.

*A London Story* is a first novel. It is a simple and not