

mastery of phrase.

Mr. Bates has written of a strange Midland family, uncouthly beautiful, tainted by insanity, and subject to incalculable nerve-storms and reactions. The father incompetently (but with undeserved success) seeks death by shutting himself up in his room for weeks together, the brothers have nothing to do but curse and fight, and both sisters love the stranger Michael, whose presence brings peace to them in their turbulent home. But he is taken from them by death in a flooded river, their other men folk die or disappear, and the two old maids live on together in vestal devotion to the memory of their common love. Mr. Bates has certainly created an atmosphere of tensity and disturbance, but only by the short-cut way of omission ; which shows us the sisters on the crests of their emotional waves, and shirks the intermediate troughs of daily life. Mr. Garnett, in his laudatory preface to "The Two Sisters," commends this exclusive method by the name of "artistic economy," but it is carried dangerously near the point of niggardly evasion ; and, unfortunately, Mr. Bates does not extend his economy to style, but debases such emphatics as "so," "great," and "very" by their lavish use—incidentally driving the reader with a sensitive ear almost crazy. He is only twenty, and will no doubt write other and better books, turning his keen searchlight more surely into other minds ; but it is impossible to forecast his other books from this one, because, with all its crudities and sins of omission, "The Two Sisters" stands by itself, a surprising achievement of the imagination.