

to human emotions and desires. One may say that he is living, as a fiction writer, on inherited intellectual capital: he has a tradition behind him to give him a direction in making his fictional inquiries. The behaviorist, who deals in surface action, and the introspectionist, who sets people in motion through tracking down the images that sift through their minds, have no tradition; they are rootless. Mr. Young is fortunate as a fiction writer in his inheritance. Whether that inheritance can last is another question.

STUFF OF DREAMS

MR. GUMBLE SITS UP. By Douglas Durkin. 232 pp. New York: Horace Liveright. \$2.

MR. GUMBLE lived and died and lived again in a timeless countryside. In his first lifetime he had not had very much fun, though he enjoyed humor as much as the next man. But what with the handicaps of a perpetually failing business and an eternally nagging wife, felicity had not come his way very often. So he was rather pleased when he was declared officially dead by the Sheriff. And he was inordinately relieved when he found that he was able to rise from his premature coffin and quietly walk out the back way one night, carrying a small pack and an umbrella that was the color of leaf mold.

The story of Mr. Gumble's subsequent wanderings is written in what might be called half-tones, so that one only sees the interesting reasonableness of the adventure. To say that this book is not at all like the many novels dealing with gripping, sizzling problems of modern life that are currently obtainable is only to state one of the reasons why "Mr Gumble Sits Up" deserves coronals of popularity.

On his voyage of discovery Mr. Gumble encountered many strange things. There was the woman he met along the road who pointed to his shadow and asked him who That Other One was, so that later on he was able to mystify several people by putting the same question to them. Then there was the woodcutter, a man of decision and brutality, who very nearly did Mr. Gumble in on one or two occasions.

The narrative of Mr. Gumble's association with the puppet master is, perhaps, more like the stuff of conventional fantasy than other parts of the book, but it provides the central complication that brings together the woodcutter and the puppet master and the Widow Flippins and her gentle blind sister Lilla and the parson and the judge very satisfactorily.

If it were not for the strange double identity of the puppet master, Mr. Gumble might have been in something of a quandary. The overtures of the Widow Flippins were not to be gainsaid. And since Mr. Gumble was under obligations to her for her hospitality while he was working for the puppet master and after he had escaped from the woodcutter's cottage, something had to be done.

Mr. Gumble did not know what to do in that instance. It is one of the appealing things about the story that he never seemed to know what to do. And yet he was always doing something to forestall destiny. So his story might be taken as a very deep allegory, which would be a mistake. Actually, it is simply good entertainment.

STORIES OF CHILDHOOD

SEVEN TALES AND ALEXANDER. By H. E. Bates. 201 pp. New York: The Viking Press. \$2.

MR. H. E. BATES is a young English novelist already well known for the delicacy and flexibility of his prose, and for the elusive charm of his characterizations. This volume of short stories, his fourth published work, brings to maturity some of the talents displayed in his earlier books. Mr. Bates has a leaning toward fantasy which seems to rise naturally from the necessities of his style, which is sometimes delicate and tenuous to the point of obscurity. While it is not fair to say that he is more

successful in fantasy than in any other medium, at least one can say that his success in it is more consistent. In dealing with the world of reality, he still has little to do with portraying strong and clear, logical or passionate emotions. He is most at home with elusive sentiments and sensations, with impressions only half understood and half remembered, the emotions of childhood and early adolescence, or of simple-hearted and uninquiring old age.

"Alexander," the longest tale in the present volume, and by all odds the finest, excellently illustrates Mr. Bates's peculiar talent. Its plot is so simple as to be nearly non-existent. A young boy, 11 or 12 at the most, sets out with his uncle in a horse-drawn cart. They are going to pick fruit at a farm some distance away, and will return the same day. They stop on the road at a house where his uncle is acquainted, and are asked in for refreshment. While his uncle gossips with old friends, Alexander, cake in hand, wanders off toward the orchard. He encounters the daughter of the household, a girl about 15, and they talk together, sometimes with the unconstrained chatter of children, sometimes with the shy inarticulateness of approaching maturity. Alexander is stirred by a new and strange emotion, half-painful and half shadowily romantic. Although he knows nothing about the girl, not even her name, the rest of the day, spent with his uncle, is mysteriously filled with her presence. He steals an apricot which he means to give her when they return. But, passing the house near the wood at nightfall, his uncle does not stop the cart.

This is all the story. But Mr. Bates manages to capture in it, as successfully as any one has ever done, the difficult emotion of pre-adolescence, the sharp and yet

diffuse impressions of youth. There is a hint of pathos in the picture of Alexander, fumbling half-consciously for his place in the adult world, as he sat in the field at mid-day eating lunch with his uncle, who

cut two slices of thick bread and began to spear pieces of rabbit with the point of his knife, eating ravenously. A knife and fork had been packed for the boy, but he felt it would be almost degrading and a little childish to use them, and rather furtively he took out a small tortoise-shell penknife and began spearing fragments of rabbit's flesh too.

None of the other stories in the volume quite equals this one—not even the exquisite sketch of a child who gazed through a tinted window pane until, irresistibly allured by a lemon-yellow beach filled with bathers, she threw off her clothes and ran down to the sea, outraging the sensibilities of fat women in bathing suits. In the fantasy of "The Peach Tree," and in the fairy story of "The King Who Lived on Air," his effect is overambitious. Either—and one cannot be sure which is the case—his allegories are too obvious to warrant a setting so elaborate, or they are too obscure to fulfill his intention.

TWIN BROTHERS

THE SHORN LAMB. By William J. Locke. 321 pp. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$2.50.

THOUGH usually regarded as more than a bit of a black sheep, "The Shorn Lamb" of W. J. Locke's new novel was in truth of an almost snowy whiteness. It was his twin brother, who posed before the world as the most respectable and well behaved of parliamentarians and Neo-Platonists, who was really black. But of this as of many other things Brotherton Drake, usually called Buddy, had not the very remotest idea when he returned to England after passing a number of not par-