

An Aspidistra in Babylon, by H. E. Bates.

Michael Joseph, 13s. 6d.

IN spite of the above remarks about the supremacy of the American short story, we have in this country two first-class current practitioners of the art: the long-established H. E. Bates and the newcomer Alan Sillitoe.

Bates prefers to call these new tales "four short novels", but where does the short story end and the novel begin? These

are an average of 60 pages long; certainly too short for a novel, yet longer than is demanded by the magazine whose editorial demands shape the current short story.

Whatever the category, the discussion is aridly academic compared with the all-important fact that these stories are highly enjoyable. Bates can write of love and create the most sensual feelings in the reader without the slightest lapse of taste, without the least suggestion of smut. He can create the most despicable characters and yet never surrender his compassion for them. Above all, he is the only contemporary male British novelist who can write convincingly of women.