

Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal, by H. E. Bates. Michael Joseph, 15s.

TWELVE short-stories by an old-practitioner of the genre, though perhaps the easiness of the narration makes one feel that this batch was produced with a certain indifference. Most of them make their point by what they forbear to say.

In *Lost Ball*, for instance, the middle-aged man on the beach, searching for his lost golf ball, meets a girl that we see is about to commit suicide. He never grasps the fact; he is too intent on other things. In *The Yellow Crab*, Mr. Pickering is too intent on other things (the lure of hidden gold) to consider that he might be murdered.

The Daughters of the Village are too intent on their own display of wit to bother about the man who evokes it (Bates' country characters, however, are as fresh as ever they were). The milliner making *The Spring Hat* is too intent on her creation to observe the feelings of her customer. And so on.

Naturally the lazy way in which this one device of character is made to serve, in several stories — however skilfully their setting is varied — lessens one's enjoyment of any one of them. If I were forced to choose a favourite I'd choose the title story, where a homosexual with taste attracts a butcher's wife without hope; the incongruity of class is neatly drawn.