

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and
Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1954

PREFACE

Mr. Campbell is that unusual specimen, an irresponsible. It is the English who evolve the eccentrics; it is the Irish who breed the irresponsibles. I am sure that Mr. Campbell feels, like anybody else, that the contemporary world is in a bit of a mess. Perhaps a shocking mess; perhaps a nauseating mess. All the more reason, therefore, he seems to argue, for having a drop of fun out of it, for poking fun at it and for administering, in the form of ribaldry and the raspberry, a much-needed corrective to its ills.

One result of this is the following collection of short stories. Their scene is wide. Girls, lodgers, nurses, dogs, lonely wives, suspicious husbands, touring actresses, actresses' lodgings, tennis players; with impious and roving eye, Mr. Campbell peers round the back-doors and through the chinks of a very varied contemporary scene. I do not know who his models are—of style, I mean; perhaps O. Henry; perhaps Leacock; perhaps Thurber; perhaps he hasn't got any. He writes sparsely, flippantly, archly, drily, offhandedly, solemnly and with wit. He has no morals, no messages, no dénouement. He makes you laugh.

I do not think, somehow, that Mr. Campbell will ever be the subject of a dissecting examination, sandwiched between a talk on Schopenhauer and the Social Significance of the Music of Duke Ellington, on the Third Programme. You can never tell, of course; but it is my fancy that he belongs to a commoner, fresher, less portentous world. He likes having fun; he is a little vulgar. I can only wish, in fact, having laughed on his very first page and having laughed most of my way through the book, that literature had more Patrick Campbells. The trouble is, I'm afraid it never does. All the more reason, then, for wishing him, in every sense, more power to his Irish funny-bone.

H. E. BATES