



Seven Tales and Alexander

H.E. Bates

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Seven Tales and Alexander beautifully captures a spectrum of emotions from innocent childhood and early adolescence, to those of simple-hearted and uninquiring old age. On its original release in 1929 (The Scholartis Press), *The New Statesman* observed that Bates has 'by seeing with a child's eyes, found a world of marvellous and strange beauty, and has given the smallest shades of change and emotion the magnitude and drama they have in the minds of children and poets.'

In 'The Child' we meet a young girl mesmerised by the sea seen through a multi-coloured window, and, in contrast, 'The Comic Actor' sees an unsuccessful farmer who, encouraged by his devoted family, fulfils a life ambition by participating in a village play.

Bates draws on his own experiences of the barber shops of his youth in 'The Barber'. Forced to visit them on Saturdays, he was made to wait until the barber had served the army of 'black-necked, poaching, shoemaking, prizefighting, often stinking men.'

The title story, 'Alexander', follows a young boy as he travels with his uncle by horse cart to the garden of an eccentric old lady, where each year they pick fruit. The boy becomes enamoured with a young girl, meets a darkly cunning and cynical poacher, picks a forbidden apricot as a gift for the girl, and is consequently thrust into first reflections on pleasure, pain, and life itself in this most charming story.

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