

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1952.



AUTHOR. "Remember that you stand or fall by your own work"

SECRET OF SUCCESS

by H. E. Bates

British Novelist and Short Story Writer

THIRTY years ago, as a boy of 17, I went on my last day of school to say good-by to the teacher who had already shown me, as blazingly as in a flashlight, the direction my life was to follow. I was not only very young. I was worse than ordinarily ardent, more than ordinarily determined. I wanted to be a writer.

Youth has sometimes a touching faith in the wisdom of its elders. I was no exception. I asked — really expecting, I think, some secret formula for incontestably swift success — if he had any advice to offer. The answer, in its simplicity, astonished and puzzled me.

"Remember that you stand or fall," I was told, "by your own work."

At the time these words seemed, I must confess, pretty thin reward. In them I found no solution to the riddle of the lightning success I so desired. "You stand or fall. . ." Why yes, of course, that was very obvious. Equally obvious was the fact that I, of course, should never fall but always stand.

It took me several years and a lot of falls to grasp the profundity of the 10 words I had taken away as my disappointing school-leaving prize. I was painfully slow in my first clumsy translation of them.

"You stand or fall. . ." In other words, "if you long passionately to walk out alone on a tightrope don't blame any one else if you fall off with an awful bang."

That was one translation. Beyond it was another.

"If you long *passionately enough* to walk the tightrope it won't matter, really, how many times you fall off. Ultimately you must get across. And what gets you across will not be the cheers, the advice or the push of someone else. It will be you and only you. In short, *you* must stand or fall, always, every time, by what *you* are."

It still sounds deceptively, obviously simple. Yet after 30 years these words, more than any others I have ever heard, have become part of my make-up. They have become firmly ingrained in my philosophy. I am what I am and what I have made myself. I have taken up attitudes, risks, positions which are my own. Perhaps they were not always good ones. I have been out on the tightrope. Perhaps not always wisely. I have taken the risks — and with them the consequences. I have learned that success starts from within.

THIRTY years ago I did not foresee all this. Nor, for a long time, did I grasp something else. It is only now that I begin to grasp the fuller significance of that "stand or fall" philosophy.

Once you step out there on the tightrope, on your own, it's surprising how often you stand, and how rarely you fall.