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GODFREY WINN

Self-discipline & professionalism

Mr H. E. Bates writes :

I had much affection and great admiration for Godfrey Winn. Though we met rather late in our careers we immediately discovered that we had much in common : an infinite dedication to the craft of writing, a profound interest in people and a keen appetite for the collecting of what were then considered to be the minor French Impressionists. When we eventually saw each other's collections of these painters we discovered that our tastes were almost identical and our judgments totally vindicated. But what I think I most admired in Godfrey Winn were his immense self-discipline, his great professionalism as a writer and the fact that he had recognized his limitations early in life and had sensibly set out to make a successful career by sheer hard work and dedication.

His original ambition had been to be a novelist, but after publishing one novel, with some encouragement from Somerset Maugham, he very wisely recognized that he lacked the paramount gift of the true novelist, namely the capacity for invention, or in other words imagination. His subsequent career as a successful and highly paid journalist needs no embellishment. That it called forth sneers from some sections of the literary world is beyond question, but whenever these sneers reached my ears I had only one brief comment: "Very well, you go and see if you can do it", which invariably silenced contemptuous mouths. His detractors probably did not know, either, that he was a very generous man. He had only to hear of someone, fellow-writer or not, in need or in trouble, and his hand would go deep into his pocket. In many ways he was a man of steel, a fact which his charm and gracious manners completely concealed.