JOHN GALSWORTHY

T. W. L. MacDermot

IN at least one respect, Mr. Galsworthy holds a unique place amongst living and widely read authors. He has almost succeeded in escaping or repelling the advances of publicity, so that about him it is next to impossible to find anything like the biographical material which has already been accumulated on behalf of most of his contemporaries. For personal details of Joseph Conrad, even before his death, we could go to his own letters and reminiscences, as well as to a very fair sprinkling of comment from friends and critics. Mr. Arnold Bennett is not in the least afflicted with reticence about his own life, and if he were, the apocalyptic utterances of Mrs. Bennett would make up for it. Mr. Wells has done his best to initiate us into the intimacies of his life *via* the semi-discreet and indirect channels of his own novels and treatises in fiction form, and has been assisted by his own band of historical disciples: while Mr. Bernard Shaw already has his own official biographer, and daily adds to his lurid material by articles to the newspapers.

But Mr. Galsworthy's life story is still slenderly confined to magazine articles and the laconic record of *Who's Who*. From the latter mine of information we learn the date of his birth, 1867, the names of his books and plays, and his Club. The inference is obvious. It would be impertinence to try to penetrate further into the personal affairs of this English gentleman, and we should be content to know as intimates only the Galsworthy whose character and spirit is embalmed in his own writing. And, indeed, anyone who has read his works attentively will agree that their companionship is sufficiently real and congenial to satisfy all but the most prying.

The social and personal itch, however, is very insistent, and so we are constrained to learn what we can first of the author, apart from his works; then we can gird up our loins for the literary satisfaction of studying the work itself.

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On his father's side Mr. Galsworthy comes of a family stock which, as he says, goes back to the Flood—that is, the Saxon flood—

and whose roots have never been transplanted far from Devonshire. On his mother's side, there is the same strong flavour of antiquity, the Bartleets being a Worcester family of many centuries' standing.

For five years (1881-1886) the young John went to Harrow, with its Norman Conquest church nearby, its three and a half centuries of school history, and its legends of Byron and Sheridan. From there he went to New College, Oxford, (over five hundred years old, and built as a counterblast to John Wycliffe), to take a moderate degree in Law. He was then called to the Bar, became a member of Lincoln's Inn, (dating back to 1300), and settled down for a brief space at a profession he thoroughly disliked. Then for two years he travelled, visiting most of the British Dominions, as well as Russia, India, and intervening countries. On his way from Adelaide to the Cape he met Joseph Conrad, and struck up a friendship which grew closer as the years passed and lasted until the end. In 1899 he published *Jocelyn*—now omitted from the list of his works—under the name Jon Sinjon. Since then he has steadily produced novels, short stories, essays, poetry, plays, and speeches. There are some forty odd titles in all.

He is married, refuses to become Sir John Galsworthy, takes a very keen interest and active part in the promotion of international letters, and lives for the most part in his attractive home in Surrey,—retiring, well-off, observant, and as independent, it would seem, of the sordid world he so unsparingly dissects as he would wish any man to be. Those who have the art to read the mind's construction in the face may study the portraits of Galsworthy for their own edification and pleasure. He has been described somewhat lavishly as having the most beautiful face among the living sons of men. And a comparison of his Julius Caesar's head, its cleanly cut nose and cleft chin, firm mouth, and distinction of bearing, with the rough and tumble practicality of Mr. Arnold Bennett, the startling insignificance of Mr. H. G. Wells's humble features, or the familiar Mephistophelianism of Mr. Shaw, will give food for speculation.

Hilary Dallison in *Fraternity* may reasonably be a fair portrait of Mr. Galsworthy himself:

> The tall man bowed. His hazel-coloured eyes were shy, gentle, and deep set; his eyebrows, hardly ever still, gave him a look of austere whimsicality. His dark brown hair was very slightly touched with gray, and a frequent kindly smile played about on his lips. His unmannerismed manner was quiet to the point of extinction. He had long, thin, brown hands, and nothing peculiar about his dress.

But without some personal assistance from the subject himself, we can add little or nothing to this outline, though no doubt odds and ends about his beloved dogs, his *obiter dicta,* his accent, etc., could be found scattered about here and there. Yet while these might tickle our little souls, they do not really help us to know John Galsworthy from any other artist or writer. His true Life is an autobiography, and is written in his own books. We have his own testimony on the point. "A novelist," he says, "however observant of type and sensitive to the shades of character, does little but describe and dissect himself...In dissecting Hilary for instance...his creator feels the knife going sharply into his own flesh, just as he could feel it when dissecting Soames Forsyte or Horace Plendyce."

It is this autobiographical aspect with which we may concern ourselves first.

Conspicuous in Galsworthy's make-up are his English lineage, the society in which he was reared, and his training in law. Curiously enough, his travels, extensive as they were, have worked into his books very little. We have scenes in Switzerland, Austria, British Columbia and elsewhere: we have foreigners, like Ferrand in *The Island Pharisees* and Soames Forsyte's French wife, Annette, but these sorties are only incidental; they are usually observation points from which to catch new lights on the domestic heath. For the great bulk of Mr. Galsworthy's work is English, English in scene, detail, subject and quality. English, too, in the historical sense of the word, a sense derived from centuries of work and adventure in and for England, from generations of English residence —the quality associated with such names as Chaucer, Oliver Cromwell, and the Bank of England. This is a heritage of which Mr. Galsworthy cannot rid himself, would not if he could, for its essence is a compound of the practical and mystical sense, its principle that of Balance, over whose passing he grieves.

While this quality belongs exclusively to no class or region of England, it is clearly associated in her history most conspicuously with her leaders, the men who have taken their place at the head of affairs when resolute guidance had fullest scope. Such leaders came from the aristocracy, those who in the past populated the castles and country houses, the Mother of Parliaments, the big commercial concerns, and the Services. Speaking generally, one may say that they have a common origin of economic substance, letters and polite manners, *plus* mental energy, courage and practical grasp. In a word, they gave meaning to the words "success" and "gentleman", and were on the whole successful gentlemen.

Mr. Galsworthy belongs to this class. His people were well off. His school and university were Harrow and Oxford. His favourite sports, shooting, (until it got on his nerves), and racing. His profession, the (in England) exclusive one of law; and, we may add, his generation, Victorian. This legacy has left its imprint on his work. The world in which his pen is most at home is the country house, the London Club, the Park Lane dining room, the rooms of Christie's, the Board Rooms of Threadneedle Street. His diction and style have the natural polish of panelled walls and evening dress: is at its easiest when playing upon sumptuous dinners and epicurean Forsytes, as, for example, the famous dinner at Swithin's, in *The Man of Property:*

> In Swithin's orange and light-blue dining room, facing the park, the round table was laid for twelve.
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> A cut-glass chandelier filled with lighted candles hung like a giant stalactite above its centre, radiating over large gilt-framed mirrors, slabs of marble on the tops of side-tables, and heavy gold chairs with crewel worked seats...He stood at the sideboard in a white waistcoat with large gold and onyx buttons, watching his valet screw the necks of three champagne bottles deeper into ice pails...Passing into the anteroom, he sat down on the edge of a chair with his knees apart: and his tall, bulky form was wrapped at once in an expectant, strange, primeval immobility ...And thus sitting, a watch in his hand, fat, and smooth, and golden, like a flattened globe of butter, he thought of nothing.

Into this somewhat heavily aristocratic world was born the novelist, and in it he grew up and was educated. Harrow and Oxford in the eighth decade of the 19th century, particularly the former, were still far more a social phase, a sort of secular confirmation, than a vital educational experience in the life of such a youth. The expense, the severe classicalism, and the absurd exaltation of athletics, were main counts against the public schools of that day, and in such institutions a boy was more likely to imbibe a deep draught of social aristocratic loyalties than to develop a sceptical or even analytical attitude towards them.

It goes without saying, therefore, that Mr. Galsworthy is steeped in the loyalties of school, profession, English country life and race. The remarkable thing is that his mind has survived it. (There is a good deal of old Jolyon Forsyte in him.) For apparently he has always questioned their ultimate validity, or at least has been artist enough to create literature out of them. And without a doubt he has plumbed the depths of spiritual pain to which they may lead.

1880 is not very long ago, as the crow of time flies. But an astonishing gulf is fixed between then and now. In the matter of

dress alone, Mr. Galsworthy himself tells the story in two sentences; and if we allow for differences of age, which are now no longer recognized, the contrast appears clearly enough between Mrs. Septimus Small, or Aunt Juley of the Forsyte family, and Fleur in *The Silver Spoon*. Aunt Juley at Swithin's "was sombrely magnificent this evening in black bombazine, with a mauve front cut in a shy triangle, and crowned with a black velvet ribbon round the base of her thin throat: black and mauve for evening wear was esteemed very chaste by nearly every Forsyte." "Fleur was returning downstairs from showing the young man his room. Already fully dressed for the evening, she had but little on, and her hair was shingled." That was the age of addition, this, of subtraction. The former was the age of Mr. Galsworthy's most impressionable years.

The third legacy of his youth is his training at law. While he practised scarcely at all, and never liked the profession, its special contribution to his palette is visible in the numerous trials, lawyers, judges, and prison scenes that are scattered through his plays and novels. Soames, the character, and *Justice*, the play, are sufficient reminder of this.

But there is more important proof of his legal education. It has coloured very deeply his appraisal of society at large. The play *Justice* is the dramatization of a problem that Mr. Galsworthy is for ever raising—the problem of the tyranny and cruelty of the social fabric to which he belongs. The obvious injustice of law, the painful miscarriages which occur, and the advantages of the rich and socially well-connected, these clearly wring his mind. With this view of the world, it is not surprising that Mr. Galsworthy detested the legal profession.

This, then, is the personality behind his works. He is the chip of a very old English block—turned in the ancient, some would say, effete, mills of English public school and university, fixed vocationally in a profession more formal, more steeped in rigid precedent than any other; but notwithstanding this formidable array of deterministic bolts and screws, he remains an independent thinker, a critical observer and an artist in words, and the literary consequences of such a combination are interesting.

The most marked consequence is the strong vein of satire running all through his work. "Satire," says Mr. H. W. Fowler, "is ridicule; its province is morals and manners; its method accentuation." And it is almost inevitable in the writing of a man whose past is so intimately part of his own life as Mr. Galsworthy's is. Driven by his own keen apprehension of life to take stock

of its meaning, he cannot fail to observe the eternal comedy that lies at the bottom of all change, and a great ocean of change has swept over the not too distant past into which he was born.

His satirical tendency has sometimes led him into less legitimate fields, however. While it is permitted to the artist to make fun of life, it is strictly forbidden to moralize about it, and this undoubtedly Mr. Galsworthy does. He is given to allegory, and uses it more than once to convey his message. One of the earliest (and worst) of his novels is *The Island Pharisees*, bad perhaps for just this moral reason. In this book he makes a study of upper class English society full of condemnation, full of rebuke. Shelton, the main figure, falls in love with Antonia, and so outrages her conventional habit of mind and that of her mother, that she breaks off the engagement. Then, in order to show that she is rigidly faithful to her code, and not as other women of an inferior class are, she re-offers her hand. But Shelton has learned his lesson, and is wise enough to keep the engagement broken. The situation is familiar, and artistically enough conceived. But there is no doubt about the odium that Mr. Galsworthy throws on the English well-to-do leisure class. The disapproval of Shelton, obviously three parts Galsworthy, is shown in his mischievous selection of details. He looks at a picture of "The Honourable Charlotte Penquin, Mrs. Dennant, Antonia's mother, Lady Bonington, and others." "Behind the calm eyes of his beloved lay a world of safety and tradition. 'I am not as others are,' they seemed to say." And England emerges stamped as the Island of Pharisees. For, he says in the preface, "we are all Pharisees, and we certainly live upon an Island."

It is in this last sentence that we may find a species of justification for the moral flavour in Mr. Galsworthy's satire. It is seldom, if ever, exclusive. Conscious of the pharisaical and other streaks in human nature, he is bound, as an artist, to give them expression; but the fact that he includes himself in the general arraignment shows that he makes it dispassionately.

A much more serious consequence of Mr. Galsworthy's literary make-up is the tearful note that it betrays at times. He is moved with a profound pity for the underdogs of mankind: and most men and women are, at some time or another, underdogs. It may be poverty that drags them under: it may be incompetence: or again and more often in his books, it may be an all-consuming passion that assails with irresistible force the citadel of their habits and self-confidence, and compels them to be false to everything that training and conviction bids them uphold. *Magpie over the*

Hill, parts of *A Bit o' Love* and *The Saint's Progress*, to mention no others, illustrate this lachrymose tendency, which causes Mr. Galsworthy's writing sometimes to break under the strain of emotion, and recalls Dickens at his sorrowfullest.

Akin to this weakness is another. It is the novelist's susceptibility to melodrama. Critics have noted the frequent occasions in his plays when the unobserved but deeply implicated wife or husband or lover or servant maid peers through a door or turns a corner at what is called the "psychological moment." This is an ancient artifice in drama, easily overdone. It happens in *The Skin Game*; in *The Family Man*, where Mrs. Builder noiselessly comes upon the unfortunate Mr. Builder "under great provocation" kissing Camille, the French maid: and in many others. *Loyalties* ends melodramatically. *A Bit o' Love* is replete with melodrama, from Strangeways's stifled gasps of spiritual pain to his abortive attempt to hang himself.

There remains one other general feature of his writing to be considered, perhaps the most interesting of all when examined in conjunction with his social background.

We may call this general characteristic a high seriousness, a lack of the sense of humour, or pessimism. All three may be right. But whether high or low, Mr. Galsworthy's seriousness is undeniable. His novels are nearly all built about a proud and dignified group of people whose feelings are deep and strong, and life to this sort is often suspended tragedy. His plays evolve from conflicts of ideals, of temperaments, of classes, with circumstances of sober hue. Of humour, broad or subtle, there is not a great deal discernible. Mrs. Builder rises to a frail pun about Camille and the last straw: *Foundations* has spots of jollity and the Forsytes, even Soames, appear comic at times. But the Forsytes could never have tolerated a truly humorous outlook and have remained Forsytes; and we must remember that Galsworthy himself is more than half a Forsyte. We must be content, therefore, with only an odd laugh here and there in his books: and even then it may have a wry note.

The charge of pessimism deserves closer examination. Mr. Galsworthy is not a pessimist in the ordinary sense of a man who tends to look at the worst side of things. Indeed pessimism probably does not suit his interpretation of life at all. Nevertheless, he works in sombre shadows. Less oppressive, because less great, he obtains an effect which is not unlike Thomas Hardy's doom-ridden world, and if we call this pessimism, then Mr. Galsworthy must bear the stigma.

One of his short stories illustrates the point. *Stroke of Lightning* is an episode in Egypt. A group of tourists, amongst them

the narrator, with Frank Weymouth and his wife, and Helene Radolin and her husband, set out on a journey across the desert. Jessie Weymouth was a tomboyish, lively young woman bent on enjoying the last weeks of her holiday to the full, and she set herself to do so. Her husband, a sunny-tempered fellow, was "in a mood of lying-back, physically run down, mentally flattened out." "To soak in idleness and the sun was all he seemed to care about." But as the trip proceeded, as Jessie Weymouth played her pranks and scampered off with Radolin, something happened:

> Inside the dining tent Radolin was playing the guitar. The sound was soothing, after the vibrant Arab music. Presently I saw Weymouth come out of the tent. He stood under the lamp at the entrance looking back; his face was fully lighted for me, but invisible, I think, to those within. I shall never forget the look on it. Adoration incarnate. And just then Helene Radolin came out too. She passed him quietly; he did not attempt to speak or follow; but she saw... and vanished into her tent. And Weymouth stood, rooted, as if struck by lightning, while on and on, behind him, rose the thrum of that guitar, and all around us the shivering of the palm leaves in a gusty breeze.
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> Quite the custom, I believe, in these days to laugh at this sort of thing—at such sudden leaps of an irresponsible force; to suggest that they are old-fashioned, overrated—literary, in fact—yet, I fancy what happened to my friend Weymouth may still happen to young gentlemen who talk as if love had no fevers and no proprietary instincts.

The fever that had overtaken Weymouth did not leave him when they got back from the desert. Forgetting everything, his wife, his school work, even the necessity of earning bread and butter, he went to Constantinople where the Radolins lived, and there burned out in hopeless passion for Helene. For though she was as much in love as he was, she would not forsake her Roman Catholic faith. And so the impossible madness went on. The man telling the story describes the last scene thus:

> That afternoon I took a boat over to the Radolins'. I mounted the steps of their house, and as I walked in my shoes made no noise on the marble path, but what I saw in the room stopped me from trying to pass.
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> Helene Radolin was sitting perfectly still in a low chair sideways to the window, her hands on her lap, her eyes fixed on the tiled floor, where a streak of sunlight fell. In the curve of her grand piano, resting his elbows on it, Weymouth was leaning back equally still, gazing down at her. That was all. But the impression I received of life arrested, of frozen lava, was in a way terrible. I stole back down the steps into my boat, and out on to the opal tinted waters.

This theme recurs constantly in Mr. Galsworthy's books. He has explained it himself in the Preface to the *Forsyte Saga* with reference to Irene. "The figure of Irene," he says, "is a concretion of beauty impinging on a possessive world." Stripped of its particularities, it is simply that of the uncontrollable consequences of passion in the lives of all men. With Mr. Galsworthy it is usually an Englishman of breeding and education, to whom in the ordinary way consuming passion with its searing touch is "literary" or unreal, or foreign, and not a thing which a gentleman would have anything to do with. But occasionally it has something to do with the gentleman, and when it does, woe betide him! Generally it conquers—as in *Stroke of Lightning*, as in *The Dark Flower*, as with Irene in *The Man of Property*. Sometimes it is conquered, as in *A Bit o' Love*. But the struggle is fierce, and always leaves its mark.

In the play, *A Bit o' Love*, for instance, we see Strangeways, a clergyman, a man of deep feelings but with immense self-control and will, and intensely religious by nature, left by an unfaithful wife with whom he is deeply in love. The temptation is to wink at the situation, and from love for her he almost yields to it. But the facts get abroad, and he is ostracized as immoral and hypocritical by his village parishioners. Crushed by the double weight of public condemnation and personal loss, he resolves on suicide. At the last he is deterred by a little girl whom he had frightened in the darkness, and the check brings him back to himself. He sets off with Cremer, a villager who had been driven half mad by the loss of his wife, to take up a life elsewhere, and as he goes away he prays: "God of the moon and the sun: of joy and beauty: of loneliness and sorrow—give me strength to go on, till I love everything."

The clearest point of this conflict between sacred and profane love, between our civilized and primitive selves as Mr. Galsworthy so often portrays it, is that there is no answer as yet to explain either its meaning or its outcome. We may supply these answers ourselves: just as Weymouth did, just as Strangeways did. But Mr. Galsworthy does not. The consequence is that when he tells us of that struggle we are left with the impression that man, however civilized, is still subject to giant and eternal forces which may at any moment catch up and carry him away against his will, and against everything else, in fact. In this dark matter he loves to deal.

The battle between different parts of ourselves is not always so profoundly tragic as this, however. Mr. Galsworthy has given

another phase of it in *Loyalties.* It takes very little examination to see that this is a play about problems of a kind with which we are all familiar. The plot turns on the conflict between personal loyalties that are all deep-seated and yet which are mutually incompatible. The Jew is determined to get his money because it is his, and because the getting is the vindication of his racial loyalty, not because he needs it: the lawyer is bent on upholding his professional standards; the club members are determined that their club and caste rights shall be maintained: the friend of Dancey is determined not to betray his friend: and Dancey, try as he may, in the end cannot be false to his upbringing. The play poses this question: Which of the many loyalties of which life is composed are we to preserve? Our conduct is simply the answer we make to it. That, at any rate, seems to be Galsworthy's view of the evolution of events. And inasmuch as our choice of one loyalty always entails the rejection of another, life becomes a very strictly audited account indeed. This choice between your friend and yourself, your popularity or your social station and your desire, your training and your instincts, is the fatal necessity that dominates our lives. From it we cannot escape.

The more thoughtful we are then, the more sensitive, the more keenly we shall feel each choice, each rejection. The more sympathetic and the more understanding, the more sharply pitiful will we be of the choice and rejection of others. Mr. Galsworthy is both sensitive and sympathetic: hence the prominence of this theme in his works. The Forsytes are for ever having to choose between property and happiness: between their family solidity and their individual impulses. On the other hand, Mr. Galsworthy's softer side, we might say, his sympathy, causes him to feel with his characters the poignancy of that choice. He is essentially tolerant of other men's weaknesses.

Now it is supposed to be the aim of art, as we have said, to be entirely free of bias, to reveal, express, create life, but not to give judgment upon it, not to moralize about it. This renders the art impure. But in literature, at least, this aim has never yet been realized—in intelligible form—and Mr. Galsworthy has got no nearer to it than Milton or Dante or Molière. In short, try as he may to present life as it is, he has not presented it, because he cannot, except as he sees it. In other words, although at his best he is a true literary artist, even at his best his view of life, and therefore the men and women he creates, have their "inherent moral", to use his own words, and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral clearly into the light

of day. "This requires," he says, "a sympathy with, a love of, and a curiosity as to, things for their own sake," and it is for this requisite that he is always striving.

While Mr. Galsworthy proffers us no universal answer to the riddle of life therefore, he does give us the answer that his own men and women make up for themselves, each out of his or her circumstances, and in addition the answer that he stands by himself.

Take the play *Loyalties* again. What is Dancey's solution of his riddle? Surely it is the pistol shot which takes his life, and announces that at last he has made the only decision that would square with his training and his instincts. What is de Levis's the Jew's? That ultimately he will be true to his race. And the lawyer's? That he will not forsake his professional standards. Read the end of *Escape*. After sheltering himself behind a number of people at some risk to them, what is the ultimate decision of the escaped convict? It is that in the last analysis a man cannot escape from his best self, and that he had better give himself up. Read *The Skin Game*. Here Hillcrist, an English country gentleman of almost the best type, descends to fighting a *nouveau riche* manufacturer with his own weapons of unscrupulousness and push, and emerges victorious but soiled, and when it is all over, he cries, "When we began this fight, we had clean hands—are they clean now? What's gentility worth if it cannot stand fire?"

But Mr. Galsworthy is most widely known through the *Forsyte Saga*, running now from *The Man of Property* down to *Swan Song*, and covering over twenty years of the author's life. Very little change is to be seen in the style, subject matter or outlook. But the last two or three books are perhaps on the whole thinner, more conversational, and decidedly less satirical than the first. Characterization is less pronounced: plot is less substantial. In *The Man of Property* the story turns on the relations of Irene and Soames, two perfectly pictured characters: in *The Silver Spoon* it turns on a rather trivial drawing-room personality of the kind made every day by a free-spoken generation. Compare Old Jolyon, Swithin, James and June, with Sir James Foggart, Michael Mont's father, Norah Curfew and Fleur. There is a general air of solidity and interestingness below the surface about the old order as Mr. Galsworthy paints it, that is lacking in the new, as Mr. Galsworthy paints it.

In the earlier books the novelist looks at his world subjectively as well as objectively. While he is introducing you to the family at Swithin's, he is also taking you aside and saying, "Look at those Forsytes. It is in their nature to be ignorant that they are Forsytes.

A Forsyte, you will notice, never gives himself away. A Forsyte takes a practical view of things, and a practical view of things is based fundamentally on a sense of property...They are half England, and the better half too, the safe half, the 3% half, the half that counts." And so on. But this semi-sententious, semi-satirical tone is seldom heard in the later books. In its place is a microscopic delineation of the private lives of Fleur and Michael: of their son's nursery, "whiteness and dimity": their dog on his fat silver side: the cosmetics of Marjorie Ferrar: all interspersed with a vague undertone of something vanishing, an old world's last fragments being swept up and cleared away.

The reason for this change may be partly the passing of time. But it is also partly due to the accuracy of Mr. Galsworthy's observation and the acuteness of his apprehension. The social worlds of 1906 and 1926 are the same, but he has given them vastly different atmospheres. The world of Fleur is trifling, its vogues more short-lived, its youth more primitive. More lively perhaps, to us, because it is more familiar; it may even be more interesting.

Mr. Galsworthy's methods of drawing character are demonstrated everywhere, of course, but nowhere better than in his studies of Soames and Old Jolyon. Soames is to-day a popular old gentleman, to whom his daughter is the apple of his eye, and who moves through the effervescent, flippant, non-idealistic London of 1926 the personification of dignity and uprightness. But it was not always so. He is introduced thus:

"Soames Forsyte, flat-shouldered, clean-shaven, flat-cheeked, flat-waisted, yet with something round and secret about his whole appearance, looked downwards and aslant at Aunt Ann, as though trying to see through the side of his own nose." (He kept this characteristic to the end of the chapter, and in *The White Monkey* is still "looking sideways down his nose.") And little by little Mr. Galsworthy touches in the details as the Man of Property pursues the stealthy but sober satisfaction of his great instinct. "He smiles sardonically. He was reserved about his affairs. He didn't drink, or run into debt, or swear, or be violent, or stay out at night, or have rackety friends. He mouses doggedly along on the shady side of the street. His sleek hair under the brim of the tall hat had a sheen like the hat itself: his cheeks, pale and flat, the line of his clean-shaven lips, his firm chin with its grayish shaven tinge, and the buttoned strictness of his black cut-away coat, conveyed an appearance of reserve and secrecy, of imperturbable, enforced composure; but his eyes, cold, gray, strained-looking, with a line in the brow between them, examined him

wistfully, as if they knew of a secret weakness. Skin-like immaculateness had grown over Soames, as over many Londoners... He would not have gone without a bath for worlds—it was the fashion to take baths." He was the family executor...It was difficult for him to pay compliments. He despised people who were lavish in their praises. He hated sunshine, "and he at once got up to draw the blind." And lastly, "moved by some inexplicable desire to assert his proprietorship, he rose from his chair and planted a kiss on his wife's shoulder."

We meet Soames with great frequency, and we grow to dislike him even as we come to know that we would have implicit faith in his discretion and capability in the management of our legal affairs.

The other great character of Mr. Galsworthy is a very different matter. Old Jolyon makes his first appearance in about 1906, but under different names and in different books he recurs frequently after that: as Silvanus Heythorp in *The Stoic*, or as the play from that story is called, *Old English*, as Anthony in *Strife*, in bits as the old club man in *Loyalties*, and fragments of this splendid old Victorian, this Forsyte bole, are scattered through other of Mr. Galsworthy's older characters. While it comes after *The Man of Property*, the short sketch called *A Portrait* is no doubt the careful study of the real man from whom old Jolyon and his kind are drawn.

"He was 80 years old, and that rather rare thing, a pure-blooded Englishman; having no strain of Scottish, Welsh, Irish or foreign blood in his pedigree for four hundred years at least. He sprang from a long line of farmers intermarrying with their kind in the most southern corner of Devonshire, and it is probable that Norse and British blood were combined in him in a high state of equality. ...Thus to the making of him had gone land and sea, the Norseman and the Celt. He was articled to the Law at the age of sixteen... and was remarkable for the inherent sanity and moderation of his instincts...He did not marry till he was forty-five, but his feeling for the future of his family manifested itself with the birth of his first child. He loved indeed almost all classical music...he loved the Old Masters of painting. His love of Nature was very intimate. simple, and unconscious...He would contemplate, with a sort of serene passion, sunset effects, and every kind of view...His love for all kinds of beauty, indeed, was strangely potent; and perhaps the more natural and deep for its innocence of all tradition and formal culture...his love of beauty was a sensuous, warm glow pervading the whole of him." One is irresistibly reminded of the

last paragraphs of the Indian Summer of a Forsyte, when old Jolyon sits waiting in the sultry shade for the beautiful "lady in grey", Irene, Soames Forsyte's wife. "It was quite shady under the tree; the sun could not get at him, only make the rest of the world bright so that he could see the Grand Stand at Epsom away out there, very far, and the cows cropping the clover in the field and swishing at the flies with their tails. He smelled the scent of limes, and lavender...He would have just one tiny nap, because he had so little sleep of late; and then he would be fresh for her, fresh for youth and beauty, coming towards him across the sunlit lawn —lady in grey."

But to return to the portrait:—"He was a great theatre-goer all his life. There was something of the old grand manner about his theatre habits. He attended with the very best and thinnest lavender kid gloves on his hands...his opera hats were notable... He carried a repeating gold watch and thin round gold chain. He was extremely fastidious in his linen, and all personal matters, yet impatient of being mollycoddled, or in any way over-valeted... He had little liking for his profession, believing it to be beneath him...Among the shareholders of his companies, of which he directed several, his integrity and judgment stood so high that he was enabled to pursue successfully a line of policy often too comprehensive and far-seeing for the temper of the times...Truly memorable were his conflicts with the only other man of his calibre on those boards, and I cannot ever remember that he was ever beaten. But after all, it was in his dealings with children that the best and sweetest side of his personality was manifested. With them he became completely tender, inexhaustibly interested in their interests, absurdly patient, and as careful as a mother. No child ever resisted him, or even dreamed of doing so. From the first moment they loved his white hair and beard, his feathers, as one little thing called them...Their sayings, too, he treasured, as though they were pearls. First poems, such as, *Isorr a worm It was haffly dead; I took a great spud, And speared through his head'*...were to him of singular promise. To the declining benison of their prayers, from their 'darling father and mother' to 'all poor people who are in distress,' he loved to listen, not so much for the sentiments expressed, as because, in their little night-gowns, they looked so sweet, and were so roundabout in their way of getting to work. He made singularly few fast friendships." And the sketch concludes thus: "His breed is dying now, it has nearly gone. But as I remember him with that great quiet forehead, with his tenderness, and his glance which travelled to the heart of what it rested on, I despair of seeing his like again. For, with

him there seems to me to have passed away a principle, a golden rule of life, nay, more, a spirit—the soul of Balance. It has stolen away, as in the early morning the stars steal out of the sky. He knew its tranquil secret, and where he is, there must it still be hovering".

Compare the first impressions of old Jolyon in *The Man of Property*. "In the centre of the room...stood old Jolyon himself. Eighty years of age, with his fine white hair, his dome-like forehead, his little dark gray eyes, and an immense moustache, which drooped and spread below the level of his strong jaw, he had a patriarchal look." And here he is at the theatre..."The greatest opera-goer of his day. There was no opera now! That fellow Wagner had ruined everything; no melody left, nor any voices to sing it...From the curl of silver over his ear to the pose of his foot in its elastic-sided patent boot, there was nothing clumsy or weak about old Jolyon."

In his own way Mr. Galsworthy is complete master of two great qualities, one of great value to the novelist, the other a pearl of price to the dramatist. He is a master of style and a master of situation. Joseph Conrad has remarked somewhere on the astonishingly high and sustained level of his friend's writing, and anyone can appreciate Mr. Galsworthy's unerring instinct for seizing on the moment of highlight in human beings' lives, when time and setting and character chime together.

Finally, there is his own attitude towards his work. On all of it is visible the imprint of a highly cultivated mind, and an almost fastidious striving for the rarest and the best handling of words and material; the delicate judicial hand of the connoisseur in pure English guides his pen. If modern literature owes nothing else to Mr. Galsworthy, it owes him the example of this jealous vigilance over the rights and privileges of the English tongue. He is well to do, and depends in no way on his pen for a living, and this independence he cherishes above everything else, "the state best worth having in life", as he says. In these days of highly commercialized literature, it is no negligible thing that English fiction and drama numbers among its leaders a man who rigidly adheres to ideals of high art and reality, and declines with the firmness of old Sylvanus Heythorp to be wooed from them by the cunning appeal of the "public service."

One may say this on the authority of John Galsworthy himself, and on the evidence of his own writing. For though you will find faults of construction, repetition, lapses into carelessness and other faults, the body of his work carries itself serenely, and bears the hall mark of a worker who loves his craft this side idolatry.