

CHAPTER I

GALSWORTHY'S LIFE

Early Years

1867 - 86 :

John Galsworthy was born in a well - to - do family on August 14th, 1867, in a villa called "Parkfield" at Kingston Hill. His mother's family were old Worcestershire landed people; and though his father's ancestors were yeomen from Wembury in Devon, they had become rich people in about three generations. He had one elder sister, Lily, who had been born in 1862. After her birth, the family moved from Portland Place to Parkfield where he himself was born. After that, they moved out to another house, a very much bigger one, called Coombe Warren; it stood in pleasant surroundings: wide fields, pastures, woods, where one could breathe the fresh country air. There, his mother gave birth to two more children, Hubert and Mabel Galsworthy. They lived there for about nineteen years and returned to London in 1886.

As a little boy, Galsworthy was taught at home by English and foreign governesses. He was very fond of reading and made himself short-sighted by reading too many books of history and adventure while he lay face downwards on the floor.

When he was nine years old, he was sent to a small preparatory school called Saugeen at Bournemouth. Here he showed considerable skill in athletics. He was one of the best runners of the school and was captain of the football team in 1880. His activities also included his first appearance on the stage as "A Rude Boy" in a comic drama, "Milky White".

At the age of fourteen, he went to Harrow where he became quite a distinguished and popular student. He showed his talent in various activities; but strangely enough no marked ability for literature was shown. The only writing we have of his from this time is a report on house sport which was kept in the House where he himself for two years served as the Head. He won the headship of his house in 1884, after only two years in that House. This was considered a great honour because

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this position required the quality of leadership, proper conduct, and an immense capacity to undertake and to perform various kinds of tasks.

Being a very skilful athlete and sportsman, he was elected captain of the school gymnastics VIII and also captain of the school football team in 1884 - 1885. Besides, he was a member of the School Singing XII and became a very good singer with his attractive baritone voice which was afterwards to charm a great many people who gathered to listen to him reading his own plays.

His scholastic career was quite satisfactory too. He was considered a good scholar. In his last term, he passed the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificate Examinations, his subjects being Latin, Elementary Mathematics, Scripture Knowledge, and History. On leaving Harrow, he was among the top dozen.

He was 19 years old when he left Harrow. He had already grown up to be a reserved and respectable young man. He had a strong will which was hidden under his calm and quiet attitude. One of his friends recorded, "I was always impressed, at the many committee meetings over which I have seen him preside, by his capacity for grasping the pros and cons of a proposition, weighing them dispassionately and pronouncing a judgment so astute that it nearly always went without criticism".¹

His outward appearance was described as "...fair, bluish - grey of eye, just under six feet, but so well - proportioned that he looked taller, athletic and rather tanned, with long - fingered powerful hands and a disarming smile, reticent, but a good listener."²

Galsworthy's University's Life

1886-89:

In 1886, he went up to Oxford and studied law. Like many rich and fashionable young men there, he led a gay and conventional life, keeping company with Etonians and Harrovians for the most part. His intimate friends described him as : "a bit cynical, often humorous,

1. N.L.Clay: Reminiscences of Galsworthy included in Galsworthy's The Man of Property (1957), p.376

2. R.H. Mottram: John Galsworthy (1956), p. 6

... certainly showed no sign of high purpose or moral earnestness," but was "rather inclined to laugh at any sign of such things in others."¹

He shared a common interest with his friends in horse-racing and private theatricals. He joined in many dramatic societies, one of which was the famous Oxford University Dramatic Society (the O.U.D.S). Though he never made an attempt to write a play at that time, he took part in a number of amateur shows at Torquay and in various country houses; he was then known to be good in quiet "straight" parts.

During his Oxford years, he often went to London and there he showed something of his hidden nature which was never to be revealed at Oxford; i.e., his keen interest in social conditions which was later to emerge as the dominant theme in his plays and novels. Mr. G.M. Harris, one of his close friends wrote, "The only characteristic which he displayed during our life in London together which differentiated him from the rest of our set was his fondness for wandering about at night in the poorer districts, listening to the conversations of the people, sometimes visiting doss - houses."²

Galsworthy had, in fact, a particular sensitiveness and sympathy for the poor, the outcasts, and all "little men". His wandering about among the poor not only widened his knowledge of mankind, but it also formed material for many of his enthusiastically accepted plays such as The Silver Box and Strife and the novel, The Island Pharisees. The chief characters in these plays are poor people whose way of living is so different from that of their rich oppressors that the reader can hardly believe that they live in the same town and are of the same nationality.

His study of Law at Oxford and his practice of it (which seems to have been very spasmodic) during the years 1890 - 1894 also had a certain bearing on his writing career. His readers will see that in many of his plays and novels, the court - scenes are deliberately and

1. H.V. Marrot: The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy (1936), p. 61. References to this work henceforth will be given simply as Marrot.
2. Marrot, p. 65

skilfully laid. The complete description of the scenes shows that the writer has great knowledge of the law and of the court's process.

Eventually, Galsworthy came to the conclusion that there were defects in English law, and this was part of the message of such plays as Justice, Escape and The Silver Box. These three plays showed how so-called justice could be the cause of a man's complete ruin.

1889-1906 The Beginning of Galsworthy's Writing Career

After taking his degree with Second Class Honours in 1889, Galsworthy was destined by his family for a career at the Bar, and was Called to the Bar. on April 30th, 1890. One year later he set out on his first colonial tour to various countries. In Canada, he visited Quebec, Victoria and Vancouver Island. His description of this trip in one of his letters was full of lively and amusing details. This trip certainly brought him new experiences well worth having; and so did his second trip to Australia, New Zealand and the South Seas in 1892. His friend, Ted Sanderson wrote about him, "Here again Jack absorbed all that he saw and heard, using the material for some of his stories. He had a photographic quality of mind which he afterwards developed to an extraordinary extent."¹

On this second tour, he met Joseph Conrad, first mate of the Torrens, an English sailing ship. Conrad was greatly admired by Galsworthy both for his rare personality and fund of experience and a few years later for his courage in working his way into the English literary circle. Conrad was a Pole and he had not spoken English until he was twenty - four years old. In 1895, at the age of 38, he published his first important short novel called Almayer's Folly. His experience of the sea and his visits to many parts of the world, especially the East and the Far East, gave him considerable material for his stories and novels.

It may be said that Galsworthy was inspired by Conrad. In one of his notes, Galsworthy wrote, "I used to stay with him a good deal from 1895 - 1905, first at Stanford in Essex and then at

1. Ibid, p. 80

Stanford in Kent. He was indefatigably good to me while my own puppy's eyes were opening to literature, and I was still in the early stages of that struggle with his craft which a writer worth his salt never quite abandons." ¹

However, it was not Conrad who in the first place urged him to write but, Ada Galsworthy, his cousin's wife, whom he himself was one day to marry: "Until I was 27 years and 8 months old, it never occurred to me to write anything. And then it didn't occur to me; it occurred to one who was not then my wife. 'Why don't you write?' she said, 'You are just the person.'" ²

From then onwards, Galsworthy began to live three lives: as an under - employed barrister and as a director of several companies; but in secret, he was also trying to be a writer. His confession came out later, "In those days I had not one single literary friend except Joseph Conrad, from whom I guarded inviolably the shameful secret that I was writing" ³

However, when he finally told Conrad that he had started writing, Conrad reciprocated warmly. He gave Galsworthy good advice on the placing of his books. He also constantly brought Galsworthy's work to the notice of great publishers.

Galsworthy's first work came out in 1897. It was a set of stories called From the Four Winds. This was followed by two novels, Jocelyn, published in 1898, and Villa Rubain (1900); and a set of stories entitled A Man of Devon which was published in 1901. A Man of Devon is the first book that mentions the famous Forsyte family. These four books were written under his pen - name, John Sinjohn. Though the appreciation and consequently the sale of these books were limited, he did not suffer financially since he had not written to earn money, his income from other sources being enough to support him and his family quite comfortably.

1. Ibid, p. 117

2. Ibid, p. 101

3. N.L. Clay: Reminiscences of Galsworthy included in Galsworthy's The Man of Property (1957), p. 373

His next novel The Island Pharisees (1904) was the first book published under Galsworthy's own name. Its reception was mixed. Those who were in favour of it stated that it was amusingly written and was not dull whereas the readers who were against it thought the characters were bores and the book suffered from over-emphasis. However, this book has in fact been much more talked about than his first four books, and in it we see the foreshadowing of the themes and of the craftsmanship of the great works that followed later.

Galsworthy was becoming more interested in the art of the novel and was learning to write well. He studied and admired Turgenev for his 'intense hatred for cruelty and humbug'.¹ He also liked de Maupassant because 'his sardonic nature hated prejudice and stupidity, had in it a vein of deep and indignant pity, piercing vision, and a sensitiveness seldom equalled.' It was believed by such critics as Frank Swinnerton that his earliest books were a direct imitation of Turgenev's novels with his dash of humanitarian moralizing. However, as his own craft grew stronger under this inspiration, he tried to do away with any tendency to imitate and developed his own trend.

His books became better too as experience enriched his life. The Boer War which began in 1899 between the English and the Africans raised many questions in his mind about various problems of society, homes, schools etc. Moreover, he himself had suffered the bitter experience of falling in love with a married woman, Ada Galsworthy, his cousin's wife who, as we have seen, urged him to write as early as 1894. They grew fonder of each other as time went on. Though Ada finally decided to cut adrift from her husband in 1902 and settled in her own flat, the two lovers did not marry until Galsworthy's father died in 1904. Galsworthy had not wanted his old father to suffer from the scandal of a divorce in the family, though to him and Ada divorce only meant an escape from a loveless marriage and it was love rather than marriage which mattered. So after some ten years of painful waiting, they were finally able to get married in 1905 and settled happily down in a little old house on Addison Road, London.

1. Ibid, p. 374

Fame

1906

The novel which Galsworthy wrote after this crisis in his life, The Man of Property (published in 1906), was also the most striking one so far. It placed Galsworthy among the top writers. After this novel, his literary independence was assured and his income from his writing grew steadily. In the same year, Galsworthy's first play, The Silver Box, was also performed before the public, and was a success. When produced, it was appreciated by all sorts of people and it was claimed to be the direct result of his mingling with the poor.

1907-8

In 1907, his second play, Joy, appeared, but it was not a great success. The general tone of the critics was that Joy was a "child's play - a flimsy, emasculate, tea-party concoction."¹ His novel, The Country House, which also came out in this year proved to be much more attractive. Some critics concluded that this book, though less powerful than The Man of Property, was truer and more pleasant to read.

The year 1907 also witnessed the beginning of Galsworthy's fight against the Censorship of Plays. After the censoring of such plays as Granville - Barker's Waste and Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession, Galsworthy's pamphlet A Justification of the Censorship of Plays appeared. He also wrote a long letter to the Censor Committee pointing out how the system of censorship could discourage men of letters from writing. Though nothing remarkable came out as the result of his fight, the censorship eventually became more sensible on the whole.

Galsworthy began Strife in this year and finished it six months before Joy was produced. However, the play had to wait for its first performance for nearly two years during which the two novels, A Commentary and Fraternity, were written and published. The play, Strife has been considered by many to be his best, and though its interest as a comment upon social conditions may have lessened now, it is still widely read and frequently performed.

1. Marrot, p. 208

1909

The year 1909 was a productive year for Galsworthy. After the appearance of Fraternity and Strife, he immediately started writing The Eldest Son, and finished it in May. Before May was out, he had written The Little Dream. He started writing The Mob at the beginning of July but this was soon discontinued for a time as he turned his attention to the new play Justice which was completed in December 1909.

This was not all that occupied his time. He began to be greatly concerned about the condition of prisons where he had made several visits; his first one being the visit to Dartmoor Prison in September, 1907. From then onward, he had been visiting many prisons, interviewing prisoners, and studying question of solitary confinement. In the beginning of 1909 (before Justice was begun), he was already busy trying to get the period of solitary confinement in English prisons reduced. He was in correspondence with the Humanitarian League, the authority on prisons and the political circles, and also wrote on the subject; we find some of his boldest comments in his play Justice.

1910

His attempt was successful. The terms of solitary confinement were reduced and later on we will see that a further reduction was to be made after the production of Justice in February, 1910.

On July 12th, 1910, he visited Churchill (Home Secretary) at the Home Office to discuss prisons. Churchill told Galsworthy that he was going to reduce solitary confinement to one month for all except recidivists (i.e. prisoners doing a sentence for a second offence) who were to have three. This was Galsworthy's great victory, and he was congratulated by Professor Murray, the famous classical scholar and liberal thinker: "Just a line to congratulate you on Churchill's announcements. I gather that he made a definite reference to Justice. It is a fine thing to have achieved, a really great thing. Does not real life seem a tremendous thing as compared with art when one gets the two together? I mean, How much greater it is to have saved a lot of men and women from two months of solitary confinement than to have sent any number of over - fed audiences into raptures." ¹

1. Ibid, p. 267

1911

After Justice came The Little Dream, a charming little play, which was performed in 1911 and met with the enthusiastic approval of the audience. Galsworthy himself also confessed that on the whole he enjoyed the production of this play more than that of any of his others.

Galsworthy's activities during this year (1911) were almost exclusively theatrical. Besides The Little Dream, he began The Pigeon, finished his four-act play The Fugitive, and directed rehearsals of his earlier plays such as Justice at Liverpool, The Silver Box at Birmingham, and Strife at Manchester and at the O.U.D.S., Oxford.

Although Galsworthy did nothing at all in the way of novel writing during the whole of the year 1911, his name remained before the public as a novelist through the publication, on March 6th, of The Patrician. The book was extremely well received both in England, America and France. He also wrote a number of poems, essays and stories including Quality, one of the best-written and best-known of his stories.

1912

On January 30th, 1912 his sixth play, The Pigeon was performed at the Royalty Theatre in London. The first production in London was not so successful as in Glasgow where the play received eleven 'curtains' at the end of the performance on the first night.

The play and its writer were also warmly received when they reached America on March 3rd, 1912. Ada's diary, written during her stay with her husband in America, records that they "attended a sort of first night of The Pigeon in New York feathers. In my humble opinion it is very much better than in London....." ¹ Galsworthy was very popular in this country, especially in Chicago where "there certainly is a most appreciative world for him over this side. They quote his books and poems by the page!" ² Galsworthy's popularity made Ada thrill with delight and she went on, "He has the most wonderful letters and appreciations from all sorts and places; one feels that (over here) they are just longing to make a spiritual leader of him! and a little hurt if they don't see signs of his stopping on to his throne!" ³

1. Ibid, p. 333

2. Ibid, p. 335

3. Ibid, pp. 338, 339

After some three months in America, Galsworthy and his wife returned home with an interesting record of his general impression of America.

At the end of 1912, there appeared his novel, The Inn of - Tranquillity and the play The Eldest Son, which had been postponed for nearly three years. When it was finally performed, it was noted as a 'fairly good succès d'estime', but it was a commercial failure.

1913

In 1913, the Galsworthys left their old house at 1A Addison Road and moved into a new London flat, 1A Adelphi Terrace House. What Galsworthy said about moving out is worth mentioning: "It was rather sad, after eight years, but when Chris departed the house was never the same again, nor the garden."¹ Chris was a dog, and to them, "the most wonderful dog that ever was." Its death was a real tragedy. Though Galsworthy and his wife were very fond of animals of all kinds and kept a lot of dogs and horses, no other was what Chris had been to them. They lost it in 1911; the entry in Galsworthy's diary ran, "Tuesday, December 19. - Addison Road. Chris is gone. Ada prostrato. Oh ! so sad a day !"²

Galsworthy's love of animals was known to all his friends. He was very sensitive to their sufferings, in fact, to the sufferings of all living things in the world. He could never just look on them being unfairly treated and do nothing. Coercion of any kind invariably engendered resentment in his tender heart and roused him to action against those unfair treatments.³

1. Ibid, p. 367

2. Ibid, p. 325

3. The following is a list of some of the causes to which, at one time or another, Galsworthy gave active support :-

Slaughterhouse Reform.

Appeal for Horses in the War.

Protection of Animals in North Africa

Vivisection of Dogs

Movements against the confinement of animals in Zoos,
against the hunting of foxes for sport and against pigeon
shooting

Labours' better condition

Woman's Suffrage

Divorce Law Reform etc.

But love of animals was no substitute for love of humanity, and in his novels (e.g. The White Monkey) and plays (e.g. The Eldest Son) he apparently criticises people who have more affection - and even understanding - for their animals than they have for their husbands, wives, children or servants.

1913 also witnessed the production of The Fugitive, a play in which Galsworthy expressed his sympathy towards a lady who was forced by circumstances and by the inadequacy of English divorce law to walk the streets and who finally ended her life in the most tragical way. He also began The Little Man in this year and finished it in five days. Meanwhile, his novel, The Dark Flower, appeared but it was not very well received in London. After that, he began The First and The Last, a very short play, and a much longer one, A Bit O'Love, which was at first called The Full Moon.

It seems to us that Galsworthy devoted all his time to writing (which was usually followed by a great deal of revision), rehearsing plays, reforming society, and travelling. But there was still another activity of his worth noting, namely:- his readings from his and other dramatists' plays at various places in England and on the Continent. He had a very fine baritone voice which always drew a large crowd, not only those who spoke English, but also those who could not understand the English language at all.

The War

1914 - 1918

"I hate and abhor war of all kinds; I despise and loathe it. And the thought of the million daily acts of its violence and hateful brutishness keeps riving my soul."¹

So this was Galsworthy's attitude towards war. However, knowing that war was by no means avoidable, he tried his best to help the situation. He realized that the immediate institution of a Relief Fund for a great many unfortunate people was needed and therefore sent off more than a thousand pounds to various War Funds at the beginning of the War.² Galsworthy's benevolence towards the Belgian refugees, he kept

1. Marrot, pp. 395, 396

2. Examples of such funds were the Motor Ambulance Fund, the Authors' and Actors' Fund, and the Belgian Refugees' Fund.

a close secret himself, but it was later revealed by the King of Belgium, who conferred on him, as a sign of Gratitude, a well-merited distinction, -- The Palmes en Or de L' Ordre de la Couronne in 1920.

Besides, Galsworthy was asked to contribute gratis to a serial issued by Scribners, the proceeds of which were to be given to war relief. He complied with the request by letting them have the novel The Freclands which he had already begun in May 1913, the serial rights of which realised £ 1,500. This was the most substantial contribution he had so far made for Relief Funds.

Remarkable though his help seemed to be, Galsworthy was still anxious to do more for his country. The thought of war kept on haunting him and pricking his conscience, and with it conflicted his love for Ada: "The heart searchings of this War are terrible; the illumination of oneself rather horrible. I think and think what is my duty, and all the time know that if I arrived at certain conclusions I shouldn't do that duty. This is what comes of giving yourself to a woman body and soul. A. paralyzes and has always paralysed me. I have never been able to face the idea of being cut off from her." ¹

But even if he had decided to leave his wife and join the army-- he really tried to do in 1918, when he was rejected because of his physical condition -- he would certainly not have been accepted. As he ruefully said in 1914, "...my game shoulder would not stand a week's training without getting my arm into a sling. Moreover I suppose there is no one yet training as short - sighted as I am. Still I worry - worry - all the time - bald and grey and forty-seven and worrying. Funny ! " ²

But he realized that he could serve his country with his pen: what he was really able to do was to write and to devote all the money that he made to Relief Funds. Among his more famous works published during the war, besides The Freclands (1915), were the plays A Bit O' Love (published and produced in 1915), The Mob (produced in 1914 but published a long time afterwards); the essays A Sheaf (published in 1916),

1,2. Marrot, pp. 411, 412 (from Galsworthy's diary dated November 15 th, 1914).

and the novel Beyond (published in 1917), of which the last one is one of Galsworthy's longest books.

His written work during the war seemed to fall below his normal level. This was quite natural for the thought of war itself had simply been wearing away all his other feelings. Besides, the Galsworthys together had, quite early on, found an active way of helping which must have been a considerable drain on Galsworthy's time and strength. After the death of his mother in 1915, he and his wife joined the Anglo - Red Cross and went to Paris to participate in hospital work at Dorothy Allhusen's Convalescent Hospital for French soldiers at Martouret. Galsworthy worked on massage the technique of which had been taught to him by a Swedish expert. His wife, Ada, worked at linen, correspondence, and prisoners' parcels. They worked there with great satisfaction for about two years and returned to their own country in March, 1917. The writing of these years therefore was done against an unusual background and in far from easy circumstances. After his return to England Galsworthy had more time for his written work. He finished The Foundations, which was performed in June, 1917. He also wrote the novels Indian Summer of a Forsyte and Grotesque, some poems and articles, all within the same year.

To return to The Foundations, its first performance at the Royalty Theatre was not quite successful. Again, it met with financial failure. Galsworthy could not help complaining, "It has become quite clear that I can never hope for a financial success with a play in London -- it's an unspeakable public. I think I must certainly hold the dramatic record for all countries -- eleven plays produced, and not one (in London) has made a penny for the management that produced it...." ¹

However, nearly all of his plays proved to be a tremendous success in America where even his lesser plays such as The Mob still did very well.

At the end of the year 1917, Galsworthy was offered a knighthood as a reward for what he had done during the war. The Prime Minister first sent a telegram to Galsworthy asking him to wire by return whether he accepted the offer or not. Galsworthy then sent his refusal

1. Ibid, p. 429

by telegram: "Most profoundly grateful but feel I must not accept."¹ However, the telegram had not been received by the Prime Minister up to the time of the announcement of the newly established knights. He then thought it would be better to anticipate Galsworthy's acceptance rather than his refusal. Consequently, Galsworthy found that his name appeared in the Lists as a knight on January 1st, 1918. In his astonishment, Galsworthy wired to the Prime Minister again asking him to cancel his name at the earliest opportunity. Though he felt that he was greatly honoured, he could by no means accept this offer considering that "no artist of Letters ought to dally with titles and rewards of that nature. He should keep quite clear and independent."² His friends and other people felt the same. One said, "He has scored both ways. He has had the honour of being knighted, and the honour of having refused a knighthood. Many men would envy him"³

Meanwhile, he continued writing. He finished the novel A Saint's Progress which he thought a 'curious hook' in April 1918; it was published in 1919. In the same year (1918), he was appointed editor of Hoveille which had formerly been called Recalled to Life. One month later, he began a new novel which was to be a satirical comedy called The Burning Spear.

1918

On July 25th, 1918, there appeared a set of Galsworthy's stories called Five Tales which comprised The First and the Last, A Stoic, The Apple Tree, The Jury man, and Indian Summer of a Forsyte. Except for The First and the Last, the rest of the stories got a warm reception from the Press. Indian Summer of a Forsyte was considered the most important piece in the volume. Apart from its own merits, it is also the link between The Man of Property and the rest of the collected chronicles of the Forsyte family which later appeared in a series of five books: In Chancery (published in 1920), To Let (1921), The White Monkey (1924), The Silver Spoon (1926) and Swansong (1928).

1, 2, 3. Ibid, pp. 436 - 8

After The War

In November 1918, the Galsworthys moved into a new house, a very charming one, as described by Galsworthy, Grove Lodge Hampstead, and there they heard of the end of the first World War.

Galsworthy had made it his regular rule even before the war, to live on less than half his income and to give all the rest away. But during the war perhaps three - quarters of his total income and all the money earned by his writing were given away to various charities. The exact total seems never to have been recorded, and is perhaps incalculable, for with it one might reckon money Galsworthy earned indirectly for the funds by his appeals. In a letter of April 1916, he wrote: "My job so far has been to write appeals, and to earn by my fiction £ 3000 or £ 4000 from America for funds." ¹

In short, Galsworthy proved that his sentimentality, or his 'excessive' ² love for the under-dog, whatever one chooses to call it, turned out to be of great use to his fellowmen, and few had more to give to their country than this 'sentimental' man.

1919

In 1919, Galsworthy was invited by Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler and the American Academy of Arts and Letters to go to America as a representative of English literature at the Lowell Centenary celebrations.

In the meantime, Galsworthy was again faced with censorship problems. Articles about the Ministry of Pensions in Reveille, of which he was the editor, were censored. Galsworthy could not compromise, feeling that he would mislead the public if he did not retain a critical and independent attitude in the review. He then decided to resign from the editorship and the articles came to an end regretted by many people such as Thomas Hardy, Robert Bridges, G.K. Chesterton and Siegfried Sassoon.

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Galsworthy and his wife made their second journey to America in February 1919 and, as on their previous visit in 1912, they were warmly received and they themselves took great delight in the people

1. Ibid, p. 447

2. Ibid, p. 446

and places they saw. They visited many states, of which interesting descriptions can be found in Galsworthy's letters to his relatives and friends. New York to them, "was excitingly beautiful; it has a peculiar poignant sensationalism of atmosphere and skies and roofs; and at night like an Arabian Night."¹ Galsworthy was disappointed when he and his wife arrived in Washington. He thought it was much spoiled by war buildings. However, every - where they went, they were enthusiastically welcomed and they thought on the whole American people were very cordial and lively. They were greatly touched by the unique atmosphere of South Carolina, "peculiar old - world, not like either world, old or now".² It was not only the "old time houses, and wonderful subtle colourings and scents" of this "unAmerican place" that pleased them, but they also found out that "the Southern voices (evidently deeply founded on darkey nurses) are very soft and pretty ; and the owners thereof are awfully nice."³ In Cincinnati, they ~~saw~~ and heard their first jazz band -- "A caution; we hoped it might be our last."⁴ They were not impressed by the Niagara falls either. They thought they were very "imposing and somehow unlovable", they far preferred the Grand Canyon.

Galsworthy travelled about a great deal in America. Besides participating in the Lowell Centenary celebrations in New York, he also gave a number of public lectures as well as lectures at various universities such as Yale and Princeton. He was also awarded temporary membership of several clubs and societies such as : The National Arts, Century, Players', Union, University, Harvard, and Cosmopolitan Clubs.

All the while, Ada proved to be of great help to Galsworthy. In a letter to his nephew, he said of her, "Your remarkable Aunt has been going great guns, and charming all hearts, and doing the most active secretarial work all at once,....."⁵

Ada also had to make a speech now and then. She made one at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. The speech was made before a performance of The Silver Box by the students. This was, in Galsworthy's opinion, an excellent performance, and it pleased him very much.

1, 2, 3. Marrot, pp. 472, 473

4. Ibid, p. 475

5. Ibid, p. 473

During his visit to America, Galsworthy met innumerable people from various walks of life. Among the distinguished men whom Galsworthy got to know well were Llewellyn Jones, the journalist; Carl Sandberg and Edgar Lee Masters, the well-known poets; and, significantly, a certain group of social reformers.

After spending some three months in America, the Galsworthys sailed back home on the Adriatic and arrived at England in May, 1919.

His lectures in America proved quite lucrative. Galsworthy was left with 4,000 dollars after all expenses had been paid; this sum of money was given to the Fund for Armenian and Syrian Relief in New York.

After his return from America, Galsworthy started writing the novel In Chancery, but dropped it for a new play in three acts, called The Skin Game which he finished in July, 1919.

There was an interesting episode in the same year over the publication in Britain of his satire, The Burning Spear which, as we have seen, he had begun the year before; this appeared under the initials A.R.P - M. The book roused little or no attention at all; nobody recognized the author's identity, and the Press said that it was very bad. Galsworthy himself wished to keep his authorship of it a dark secret; when he sent The Burning Spear to Professor Murray on May 18th, 1919 he wrote, "By the way, I wonder if the enclosed little book will interest you. The Press say it's very bad; I have some sympathy with it and its author."¹ Professor Murray, however, made no comment on the book until 1923 when Galsworthy made known that it had in fact been written by him. This was Murray's reply then: "...I have owed you a letter for a longtime, but was so overworked that I didn't write to anyone. I read The Burning Spear twice..... I don't quite think it comes off. It is in the Don Quixote style, and I think it is too rude an instrument for you".²

Murray proceeded in this letter to say that he had met a virtuous young Austrian woman at the top of a small mountain three days before. This woman told him in German that she greatly admired Shaw and Galsworthy, and he confirmed her opinion.

It seems to us that Galsworthy was more popular among peoples of other nations than among his fellow-countrymen. We have seen, and

shall see later on, that wherever he went outside his own country, America, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria etc. he was welcomed as a great literary leader, and most of his plays were much better received in those countries than in England. This is especially true of America.

1920

Galsworthy was very fond of travel. Every year seemed to find him restless, and Galsworthy often chose to travel during the first months of the year in order to get away from the winter in London. In 1920, he and his wife went to visit some countries on the Continent such as Spain and France. It was recorded that on January 10th, 1920, the King of Belgium bestowed upon him the Palmes on Or de L' Ordre de la Couronne in recognition of the valuable services which he had rendered to the Belgians' Cause during the war.¹

It was also in this year that Galsworthy was elected a member of the Athenaeum Club honoris causa, under a special rule, as a person distinguished in literature.

As for his literary work, 1920 was for Galsworthy a prolific year by way of editions of new and of previously published works. This is the list: Tatterdemalion, The Foundations, The Skin Game, Fourth Series, In Chancery, and Awakening. Among these, perhaps the most important publication was The Skin Game, the play which was Galsworthy's first commercial success in the theatre. This play was also presented in America and Paris. In Paris the play was entitled Les Coeurs sans Pitié, and the French version was reported to have borne little if any relation to the original.

1921

In 1921, Galsworthy and his wife set out on a journey again. This time, they went to Quebec in Canada and then to New York where they saw productions of The Skin Game and The Mob. The production of The Skin Game was, in Galsworthy's opinion, not nearly as good as the London production. It was badly miscast but still, it had quite a good run. The Mob, on the other hand, was to Galsworthy a "really topping production and performance", and its run was lengthened from an original

1. See above, p. 12

four weeks to eight weeks to meet the public's demand. Galsworthy also gave a lecture entitled Castles in Spain at the Cosmopolitan Club and at Yale and it was noted by Galsworthy to be a most enthusiastic affair. Later the Galsworthys moved to the western part of America where the climate was pleasant and also dry enough for Ada who had long been suffering from bronchitis and throat trouble. He played much lawn tennis and wrote A Hedonist, The Man Who Kept His Form, Santa Lucia, Windows, most of A Family Man, and Punch and Go.

After their return to England, the Galsworthys went to Wingstone where Galsworthy was to organize a village cricket team. It may be remembered that Galsworthy had been an excellent sportman in his younger days. It was quite a long time since Harrow, but his spirit never lessened as he grew older. In spite of his already being 54, he determined to fight to the bitter end. His team won many times and knocked up outstanding scores. Galsworthy himself gave a splendid performance; "I made the equal top score of 20", said Galsworthy in a letter to his friend, "by a combination of luck and will - power seldom beheld." ¹

During the summer of 1921, Galsworthy wrote the play Loyalties, the stories Blackmail, The Broken Boot, and A Feud. On September 28th 1921, To Let, another book about the Forsytes appeared. It was well received both by the critics and the public, and it sold much better than its predecessor. After reading To Let, one of Galsworthy's friends, Siegfried Sassoon, wrote to Galsworthy's wife, "Tell John Galsworthy that To Let has sent me back to the Man of Property and Indian Summer and I take off my hat to him and all his Forsytes; that that family is becoming a part of the national consciousness, I am surer than ever." ²

In this year there also appeared Galsworthy's six short plays: The First and the Last, The Little Man, Hall - marked, Defeat, The Sun and Punch and Go. Three of them, The Little Man, Defeat, and The Sun dealt, either directly or indirectly, with people during and after the war. The First and the Last and Hall - marked were a criticism of people's morality, whereas Punch and Go was meant to point out how the public as well as the big man in theatrical business were responsible

1. Marrot, p. 508

2. Ibid, p. 511

for the low standards in the theatre.

On October 6th 1921, the P.E.N. Club was founded in London, at the Florence Restaurant by Mrs. Dawson Scott, with Galsworthy as its President, an office he held until his death thirteen years later. Though Galsworthy now and then had a desire to resign from the Presidency feeling that he was occupying a position which some other writers coveted, his secretary, Mr. Hermon Ould, always dissuaded him, believing that "His influence in the club - which I know was invaluable and enormous - would be reduced if he lapsed into ordinary membership." ¹ As the President, Galsworthy worked with all the force of his influence and sagacity. He was successful in persuading Shaw to join the P.E.N. Club even though Shaw had always been against the idea of literary men associating with one another; "Not only because of their cliques and hatreds and envies," said Shaw, "but because their minds inbreed and produce abortions." ² Moreover, Shaw knew full well that he was intensely disliked by the average literary man, and for all these reasons, determined that he would 'avoid literary circles as plague areas.' However, in the end Shaw, to everyone's astonishment, consented to join the P.E.N. Club in 1924 at Galsworthy's persuasion.

1922

In 1922, Galsworthy two plays Loyalties and Windows were produced. Their receptions were not the same. The critics' attitude on the whole can be summed up by the following lines from the Daily Chronicle "Loyalties is hardly a play with a moral. It scarcely asks us any questions. It certainly does not preach a doctrine. But because it is brilliantly constructed as pure play - not as propaganda it retains its grip up till the last moment. Mr. Galsworthy's new play, Windows,does not. It sets out to discuss social problems. It asks us many questions and only returns us the shadowiest answers. But if its ethics are muddled, this is not the only fault. It is less well handled - as pure play - writing than anything Mr. Galsworthy has given us for some time." ³

1. Ibid, p. 512

2. Ibid, p. 545

3. Ibid, p. 517



Later on the holograph manuscript of Loyalties was auctioned for the benefit of the Royal Literary Fund, and gained the substantial sum of £ 3300.

After these two productions, the Galsworthys prepared for their Scandinavian tour which began in March, 1922. This tour proved that Galsworthy's eminence was already unquestioned abroad as well as at home. Everywhere he went, he was followed by photographers, interviewers and enthusiastic admirers. He gave lectures on such writers as Dickens, Turgenev, Maupassant, Tolstoy, and Conrad. He dined with the Crown Prince of Sweden more than once and thought that the prince was a very nice fellow. Having considerable experience in conducting the P.E.N. Club, he was able to help a great deal in organizing various P.E.N. Club in Sweden and in other countries.

Soon after his return to England Galsworthy went to St. Andrews and was made Doctor of Law, in company with General Lawrence and E.V. Lucas.

To return to his literary career, sometime between the production of The Skin Game in 1920 and that of Loyalties in 1922, came the production of A Family Man. This took place at the Comedy Theatre, London, either in May 1921 or sometime early in 1922.¹ The play, however, was not very well received and did not enjoy a long run.

On May 25th 1922, The Forsyte Saga appeared. It was a series of five books put together in one single volume. The titles of the five books are The Man of Property, Indian Summer of a Forsyte, In Chancery Awakening, and To Let. It instantly became popular both in England and many other countries, America, France, Norway, Sweden, and even China. The book was a best seller and its publication was one of the great landmarks of Galsworthy's literary career.

Another notable event in the year 1922 was Galsworthy's reading from his play Loyalties at the University of Leeds. He had in fact given a reading at Leeds two years earlier, which was so successful that he was asked to give another, that of 1922. The record of his reading in 1922 can be found in Sir Michael Sadler's letter² and in a certain local

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1. I have so far been unable to find the exact date owing to lack of reference works in Thailand at the present time.
 2. Quoted in Marrot, pp. 523 - 4

paper which described the event vividly. It said that the Great Hall of the University of Leeds was full long before the reading of Loyalties started. While listening, the audience was kept in close mental touch with the author throughout the whole of the play because the author was such a good interpreter of his own text. "In his reading," continued the report, "Mr. Galsworthy naturally emphasized certain little fancies and literary touches with which he, as judge of his own work was satisfied, but which, in the broad effect which the producer of the play had to create, were apt to be overlooked.....one could not help thinking what a lot of literary labour would have been saved if one could have heard Shakespeare read Hamlet,....." ¹

1923 - 4

In September 1923, Galsworthy's collection of stories, Captures, came out and was received in a manner beyond the expectation of Galsworthy himself. Captures was Galsworthy's only publication in the year 1923, but the following year saw a great harvest of works. In it appeared three of his dramas, The Forest, The Little Man and Old English. Old English was in fact a dramatic version of the story The Stoic in Five Tales, and Galsworthy had first intended it to have the same title as the story. Besides his plays, there was a collection of stories entitled Abracadabra and other satires, and the novel The White Monkey, another Forsyte book, which was said by many critics to be intensely modern and also one of Galsworthy's best.

About this time, several honours fell to him. He was elected President of Birmingham University Dramatic Society, and President for 1924 of the English Association; his address On Expression on this occasion was later published. Galsworthy was also offered an honorary doctorate by Yale, but he refused to accept the honour as he was unable to go to America to receive it. It was recorded too that in October, 1924, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University wrote to Galsworthy offering him the appointment of Rede Lecturer for the year 1925. Galsworthy, however, gratefully declined, giving his reason that he was afraid that the writing of a lecture or address would completely spoil his power of concentration on the novel.

1. Marrot, p. 524

Towards the end of 1924, there occurred the sudden death of his beloved elder sister, Lily. Nothing of her illness was known until one day before her death. It was a heavy blow for the Galsworthys who had considered that Lily was a part of their lives ever since she had been deserted by her husband, Professor Sauter. Professor Sauter had been interned during the war, and after his repatriation, had never returned to his wife and his son, Rudolf Sauter. Galsworthy then became their great comforter and protector. The death of Lily brought Rudolf Sauter to an even more intimate and closer relation with his sympathetic uncle. Shortly after Lily's death, the Galsworthys and the Sauters, Rudolf and his wife, made another journey to avoid the London winter as usual. This time they planned to go to the South of Italy and North Africa, and to visit such countries as Sicily, Tunis, Egypt and Morocco.

On their way, Ada caught cold and had to stay in bed for several days. Galsworthy stayed at her side, "the usual angel" he always was in illness. "He has a genius for nursing and does really enjoy coffee making, milk boiling and all such games." ¹ said Ada approvingly.

1925

In the beginning of the year 1925, while the Galsworthys were still travelling in North Africa, they heard the news of William Archer's death. To Galsworthy, Archer's death was "a real loss to all that is good in the world" ² because he himself had come to appreciate him as a most precious controversialist and a true friend.

From his account of the Middle East trip we see further evidence of Galsworthy's constant love of art and antiquities. He showed particular interest in such things as hieroglyphics, and examined Arab art with a critical and discerning eye.

When Galsworthy did not go out sight-seeing, he concentrated on writing the novel The Silver Spoon. He had not finished it when he returned to London on the last day of April, 1925.

The next month, he went to Paris for the International P.E.N. Club gathering, at which he delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne, 'to a most responsive and brilliant audience.'

1. Ibid, pp. 553, 554

2. Ibid, p. 556

There is not much to say about his written work in this year. Besides his work on The Silver Spoon, and the appearance of his tales collected in one volume under the title of Caravan, there was only one fresh work, i.e. the play The Show which was produced at St. Martin's theatre this year.

1926

In 1926 Galsworthy and his wife had a chance to visit Vienna. There they saw Productions of four of Galsworthy plays. The following is Ada's note on them: "This seems to beat all records, 4 plays of one author in one city in 5 days ! Poor Jack was so mobbed by autograph youngsters last evening going in to Loyalties that he had to be rescued by a special policeman." ¹ In Ada Galsworthy's opinion, the interpretations of the four plays were really very good, but she was not satisfied with some characters such as Dancy in Loyalties. ²

At the end of this year (1926), his play Escape appeared. It was announced as the last play that Galsworthy intended to write. But after its immediate and tremendous success when produced at the Ambassadors Theatre, Galsworthy was asked by many to go on writing. He therefore decided to write two more plays Exiled and The Roof, which were both produced in 1929.

Shortly after the production of Escape, appeared the novel, The Silver Spoon. It was warmly received both in England and America, where the book quickly sold over 100,000 copies. Though the reception of this book in England was somewhat cooler, even there it had to be reprinted only two months after its first appearance.

The Last Period of Galsworthy's Life -- Bury House

1926

In this year, Galsworthy changed house again. At first the idea had been to find a new house for his nephew, Rudolf Sauter, and his wife. The Galsworthys had given up their own country retreat in Devon and at Wingstone, Manaton on discovering that they were not good for Ada's health, and they hoped that the Sauters' new house would serve as a replacement for these.

1. Ibid, p. 574

2. Apart from Loyalties, the rest of the plays have German titles: Urwald (The Forest) Fenster (Windows), and Senzation (The Show).

The Sauters searched and searched in vain for a suitable house. At last, at Pulborough, they and the Galsworthys came across a very big Tudor-style house with 15 bedrooms which was then for sale. The house was at the bottom of a hill and was surrounded by a wide area of land. It was a long stone building of three storeys with a stone tile roof, and had been rebuilt in 1910 on the site of an earlier house which had been destroyed by fire. Galsworthy took to it at once, and as its price was more than the Sauters could afford, he decided to buy it himself and invite Rudolf and his wife to come to live with him instead. The arrangement worked well. Here is his nephew's summing up: "Thus it was we came to enjoy the remarkable privilege of living for so many years with two such rare people, sharing their lives intimately, travelling with them on long winter journeys, and coming back, always with pleasure." ¹

Galsworthy then became the owner of this big house, Bury House as it was called, on September 16, 1926. There was an atmosphere of calmness and peace everywhere around it. Nearby was a wood where Galsworthy and his nephew frequently rode in the early morning. Riding side by side with Galsworthy, Rudolf was greatly impressed by his uncle's expression. "Walking his horse beneath the dappled, flickering light of the beechwood, he would become so much at one with beast and tree, and air and sun and shadow, moving, as it were, in a world remote, that a mood of ecstasy, very nearly approaching religious exaltation, would come over his face." ² This mood of ecstasy or near exaltation, described by Sauter, was obviously the outcome of Galsworthy's fine nature and sensitivity to atmosphere and environment - a sensitivity which found an outlet elsewhere in his enjoyment of the arts. He showed considerable aesthetic awareness in his response to painting and music. His own love of art is behind the references to it in his novels. For instance, Soames in The Man of Property, has great pleasure in buying and collecting good pictures. He usually spends his Sunday afternoons examining and admiring them, trying to forget all his work and trouble. Galsworthy himself was also very fond of paintings. Whenever he was abroad, the first place he visited was often the art gallery; he had a particular admiration for Goya. As for music, he liked that of Mozart, Bach, and Chopin, but also enjoyed

1. Marrot, p. 585

2. Ibid, p. 587

the lighter kind: he was fond of the rhythm of the tango, and his favourite songs were from "The Beggars' Opera."

Galsworthy determined to lead a private life at Bury House as much as possible. Having come to his sixties, he felt somewhat tired of the busy life in London, of being surrounded by interviewers, photographers, and admirers. Here at Bury House, he spent most of his time doing things at his own free will. Usually he spent two hours riding before breakfast, followed by a full morning's work with Ada as his secretary. He frequently played tennis in the afternoon. After tea, he would spend the time revising and correcting proofs. His dinner usually began at about eight. After dinner, came the time for music, conversation on various subjects, and often billiards. He was very skilful at billiards and was seldom beaten even by expert billiard players.

Galsworthy was very fond of Bury House. He kept on altering and improving the house and the garden. He paid particular attention to the hall of the house, which was in his opinion too narrow and badly proportioned. An incident which occurred while Galsworthy's new garden was being laid out, shows how his concern for the welfare of others had lasted on into middle-age, and shows too that he practised what he preached. Ada and his nephew were dissatisfied with the three men who were employed to do it and wanted to dismiss them. Galsworthy did not agree with this; his main reason being that there were already more than two million people out of work and he had no idea where his three men would go to get employment. Besides, he always realized that the most important thing of all was an atmosphere of good will in the neighbourhood and he would rather have peace of mind than a better garden and flowers.

1927

The only publication of Galsworthy's in 1927 was the book, Two Forsyte Interludes. However, the novel Swan Song was also finished this year, which in Galsworthy's opinion, ranked with The Man of Property as the best of his single novels.

In May, 1927, Galsworthy received an honorary Doctorate of Letters from Manchester University. He was also offered an honorary degree from Princeton University in this year, but as he was unable to travel just then, the degree was not given to him until his visit to America four years later.

1929

In 1929, Galsworthy's play Exiled was produced and it met with a rather cold reception on the part of the public as well as the critics. The Sunday Express said, "The plain truth about Exiled is that while, judged from the standard of Strife and Justice and The Silver Box, it is dull and rambling, it is, of course, twenty times as good as nearly all the plays seen in England during the last ten years.

"It is disappointing for Galsworthy, that is all."¹

About five months later, Galsworthy's last play, The Roof, was produced at The Vaudeville Theatre, London. It was not very well received either. A young critic went so far as to conclude, after seeing this play, that Galsworthy had lost nearly all his dramatic power, while his humour was something to cry over because he had descended to the tricks of a hack dramatist and the humour of a school boy. This play will be discussed later on in this thesis.

All through his life, Galsworthy had been honoured and given awards both for his writings and for his beneficial acts towards others. During the last four years of his life, he received an honorary Doctorate of Letters from Dublin and Oxford and also an L.L.D. from Cambridge. In 1932 Galsworthy was awarded what is perhaps the greatest honour in the literary world, the Nobel Prize for Literature. The prize was worth about £ 9000, and according to Galsworthy's wish, it was turned into a Trust Fund for the benefit of the P.E.N. Club.

Though Galsworthy's dramatic career seemed to have ended in the year 1929, he did in fact begin another play, Similes (which was written only to pass the time and was never finished), and he still went on with his novels, stories and essays; of these, the most remarkable ones are the stories On Forsyte Change and Soames and The Flag which were published in 1930; the novels Maid in Waiting (1931), Flowering Wilderness (1932), and Over The River which proved to be Galsworthy's last; it was finished on August 13th, 1932, and was published in 1933, the last year of his life.

By the end of 1932, Galsworthy's health which had been declining since 1930 was getting worse, and he had in fact been unable to go to Stockholm that year to receive the Nobel Prize because of his illness.

1. Ibid, p. 616

When he was finally persuaded to go to see a doctor, much against his will, he was informed that his anaemic condition was serious and the cure would take a long time.

In spite of complete rest, Galsworthy's health did not get better. He became weaker and weaker. His voice was hardly audible, and his limbs less and less under control. He was confined to his bed for about a month, and he passed away quietly with his wife, relatives, and nurses around him in the morning of January 31st, 1933.

In February, 1933, his body was, according to his own wish, cremated at Woking. Later on, the Dean of Westminster conducted a Memorial Service for him in Westminster Abbey. There was an exceptionally large congregation of people who had come to pay a last tribute of admiration and respect. Not only writers and others of distinction, from the Prime Minister downwards, but also many members of the public, were present.

One month later, Galsworthy's ashes were scattered at the top of Bury Hill. This, again, was done according to Galsworthy's own wish as expressed some years earlier in his poem,

Scatter my Ashes !

Scatter my ashes !

Let them be free to the air,
Soaked in the sunlight and rain,
Scatter, with never a care
Whether you find them again.
Let them be grey in the dawn,
Bright if the noontime be bright,
And when night's curtain is drawn
Starry and dark with the night.
Let the birds find them and take
Lime for their nests, and the beast,
Nibbling the grizzled grass, make
Merry with salt to his feast.

Scatter my ashes !

Hereby I make it a trust ;
I in no grave be confined,
Mingle my dust with the dust,
Give me in fee to the wind !

Scatter my ashes !
