# GALSWORTHY JOHN

## THE FORSYTE SAGA, VOLUME III. AWAKENING. TO LET

John Galsworthy

# The Forsyte Saga, Volume III. Awakening. To Let

**Galsworthy J.**

The Forsyte Saga, Volume III. Awakening. To Let / J. Galsworthy — «Public Domain»,

# Содержание

# John Galsworthy
# The Forsyte Saga, Volume III. / Awakening / To Let

## AWAKENING

*TO CHARLES SCRIBNER*

## AWAKENING

Through the massive skylight illuminating the hall at Robin Hill, the July sunlight at five o'clock fell just where the broad stairway turned; and in that radiant streak little Jon Forsyte stood, blue-linen-suited. His hair was shining, and his eyes, from beneath a frown, for he was considering how to go downstairs, this last of innumerable times, before the car brought his father and mother home. Four at a time, and five at the bottom? Stale! Down the banisters? But in which fashion? On his face, feet foremost? Very stale. On his stomach, sideways? Paltry! On his back, with his arms stretched down on both sides? Forbidden! Or on his face, head foremost, in a manner unknown as yet to any but himself? Such was the cause of the frown on the illuminated face of little Jon…

In that Summer of 1909 the simple souls who even then desired to simplify the English tongue, had, of course, no cognizance of little Jon, or they would have claimed him for a disciple. But one can be too simple in this life, for his real name was Jolyon, and his living father and dead half-brother had usurped of old the other shortenings, Jo and Jolly. As a fact little Jon had done his best to conform to convention and spell himself first Jhon, then John; not till his father had explained the sheer necessity, had he spelled his name Jon.

Up till now that father had possessed what was left of his heart by the groom, Bob, who played the concertina, and his nurse "Da," who wore the violet dress on Sundays, and enjoyed the name of Spraggins in that private life lived at odd moments even by domestic servants. His mother had only appeared to him, as it were in dreams, smelling delicious, smoothing his forehead just before he fell asleep, and sometimes docking his hair, of a golden brown colour. When he cut his head open against the nursery fender she was there to be bled over; and when he had nightmare she would sit on his bed and cuddle his head against her neck. She was precious but remote, because "Da" was so near, and there is hardly room for more than one woman at a time in a man's heart. With his father, too, of course, he had special bonds of union; for little Jon also meant to be a painter when he grew up – with the one small difference, that his father painted pictures, and little Jon intended to paint ceilings and walls, standing on a board between two step-ladders, in a dirty-white apron, and a lovely smell of whitewash. His father also took him riding in Richmond Park, on his pony, Mouse, so-called because it was so-coloured.

Little Jon had been born with a silver spoon in a mouth which was rather curly and large. He had never heard his father or his mother speak in an angry voice, either to each other, himself, or anybody else; the groom, Bob, Cook, Jane, Bella and the other servants, even "Da," who alone restrained him in his courses, had special voices when they talked to him. He was therefore of opinion that the world was a place of perfect and perpetual gentility and freedom.

A child of 1901, he had come to consciousness when his country, just over that bad attack of scarlet fever, the Boer War, was preparing for the Liberal revival of 1906. Coercion was unpopular, parents had exalted notions of giving their offspring a good time. They spoiled their rods, spared

their children, and anticipated the results with enthusiasm. In choosing, moreover, for his father an amiable man of fifty-two, who had already lost an only son, and for his mother a woman of thirty-eight, whose first and only child he was, little Jon had done well and wisely. What had saved him from becoming a cross between a lap dog and a little prig, had been his father's adoration of his mother, for even little Jon could see that she was not merely just his mother, and that he played second fiddle to her in his father's heart: What he played in his mother's heart he knew not yet. As for "Auntie" June, his half-sister (but so old that she had grown out of the relationship) she loved him, of course, but was too sudden. His devoted "Da," too, had a Spartan touch. His bath was cold and his knees were bare; he was not encouraged to be sorry for himself. As to the vexed question of his education, little Jon shared the theory of those who considered that children should not be forced. He rather liked the Mademoiselle who came for two hours every morning to teach him her language, together with history, geography and sums; nor were the piano lessons which his mother gave him disagreeable, for she had a way of luring him from tune to tune, never making him practise one which did not give him pleasure, so that he remained eager to convert ten thumbs into eight fingers. Under his father he learned to draw pleasure-pigs and other animals. He was not a highly educated little boy. Yet, on the whole, the silver spoon stayed in his mouth without spoiling it, though "Da" sometimes said that other children would do him a "world of good."

It was a disillusionment, then, when at the age of nearly seven she held him down on his back, because he wanted to do something of which she did not approve. This first interference with the free individualism of a Forsyte drove him almost frantic. There was something appalling in the utter helplessness of that position, and the uncertainty as to whether it would ever come to an end. Suppose she never let him get up any more! He suffered torture at the top of his voice for fifty seconds. Worse than anything was his perception that "Da" had taken all that time to realise the agony of fear he was enduring. Thus, dreadfully, was revealed to him the lack of imagination in the human being.

When he was let up he remained convinced that "Da" had done a dreadful thing. Though he did not wish to bear witness against her, he had been compelled, by fear of repetition, to seek his mother and say: "Mum, don't let 'Da' hold me down on my back again."

His mother, her hands held up over her head, and in them two plaits of hair – "couleur de feuille morte," as little Jon had not yet learned to call it – had looked at him with eyes like little bits of his brown velvet tunic, and answered:

"No, darling, I won't."

She, being in the nature of a goddess, little Jon was satisfied; especially when, from under the dining-table at breakfast, where he happened to be waiting for a mushroom, he had overheard her say to his father:

"Then, will you tell 'Da,' dear, or shall I? She's so devoted to him"; and his father's answer:

"Well, she mustn't show it that way. I know exactly what it feels like to be held down on one's back. No Forsyte can stand it for a minute."

Conscious that they did not know him to be under the table, little Jon was visited by the quite new feeling of embarrassment, and stayed where he was, ravaged by desire for the mushroom.

Such had been his first dip into the dark abysses of existence. Nothing much had been revealed to him after that, till one day, having gone down to the cow-house for his drink of milk fresh from the cow, after Garratt had finished milking, he had seen Clover's calf, dead. Inconsolable, and followed by an upset Garratt, he had sought "Da"; but suddenly aware that she was not the person he wanted, had rushed away to find his father, and had run into the arms of his mother.

"Clover's calf's dead! Oh! Oh! It looked so soft!"

His mother's clasp, and her:

"Yes, darling, there, there!" had stayed his sobbing. But if Clover's calf could die, anything could – not only bees, flies, beetles and chickens – and look soft like that! This was appalling – and soon forgotten!

The next thing had been to sit on a bumble bee, a poignant experience, which his mother had understood much better than “Da”; and nothing of vital importance had happened after that till the year turned; when, following a day of utter wretchedness, he had enjoyed a disease composed of little spots, bed, honey in a spoon, and many Tangerine oranges. It was then that the world had flowered. To “Auntie” June he owed that flowering, for no sooner was he a little lame duck than she came rushing down from London, bringing with her the books which had nurtured her own Berserker spirit, born in the noted year of 1869. Aged, and of many colours, they were stored with the most formidable happenings. Of these she read to little Jon, till he was allowed to read to himself; whereupon she whisked back to London and left them with him in a heap. Those books cooked his fancy, till he thought and dreamed of nothing but midshipmen and dhows, pirates, rafts, sandal-wood traders, iron horses, sharks, battles, Tartars, Red Indians, balloons, North Poles and other extravagant delights. The moment he was suffered to get up, he rigged his bed fore and aft, and set out from it in a narrow bath across green seas of carpet, to a rock, which he climbed by means of its mahogany drawer knobs, to sweep the horizon with his drinking tumbler screwed to his eye, in search of rescuing sails. He made a daily raft out of the towel stand, the tea tray, and his pillows. He saved the juice from his French plums, bottled it in an empty medicine bottle, and provisioned the raft with the rum that it became; also with pemmican made out of little saved-up bits of chicken sat on and dried at the fire; and with lime juice against scurvy, extracted from the peel of his oranges and a little economised juice. He made a North Pole one morning from the whole of his bedclothes except the bolster, and reached it in a birch-bark canoe (in private life the fender), after a terrible encounter with a polar bear fashioned from the bolster and four skittles dressed up in “Da’s” nightgown. After that, his father, seeking to steady his imagination, brought him Ivanhoe, Bevis, a book about King Arthur, and Tom Brown’s Schooldays. He read the first, and for three days built, defended and stormed Front de Boeuf’s castle, taking every part in the piece except those of Rebecca and Rowena; with piercing cries of: “En avant, de Bracy!” and similar utterances. After reading the book about King Arthur he became almost exclusively Sir Lamorac de Galis, because, though there was very little about him, he preferred his name to that of any other knight; and he rode his old rocking-horse to death, armed with a long bamboo. Bevis he found tame; besides, it required woods and animals, of which he had none in his nursery, except his two cats, Fitz and Puck Forsyte, who permitted no liberties. For Tom Brown he was as yet too young. There was relief in the house when, after the fourth week, he was permitted to go down and out.

The month being March the trees were exceptionally like the masts of ships, and for little Jon that was a wonderful Spring, extremely hard on his knees, suits, and the patience of “Da,” who had the washing and reparation of his clothes. Every morning the moment his breakfast was over, he could be viewed by his mother and father, whose windows looked out that way, coming from the study, crossing the terrace, climbing the old oak tree, his face resolute and his hair bright. He began the day thus because there was not time to go far afield before his lessons. The old tree’s variety never staled; it had mainmast, foremast, top-gallant mast, and he could always come down by the halyards – or ropes of the swing. After his lessons, completed by eleven, he would go to the kitchen for a thin piece of cheese, a biscuit and two French plums – provision enough for a jolly-boat at least – and eat it in some imaginative way; then, armed to the teeth with gun, pistols, and sword, he would begin the serious climbing of the morning, encountering by the way innumerable slavers, Indians, pirates, leopards, and bears. He was seldom seen at that hour of the day without a cutlass in his teeth (like Dick Needham) amid the rapid explosion of copper caps. And many were the gardeners he brought down with yellow peas shot out of his little gun. He lived a life of the most violent action.

“Jon,” said his father to his mother, under the oak tree, “is terrible. I’m afraid he’s going to turn out a sailor, or something hopeless. Do you see any sign of his appreciating beauty?”

“Not the faintest.”

"Well, thank heaven he's no turn for wheels or engines! I can bear anything but that. But I wish he'd take more interest in Nature."

"He's imaginative, Jolyon."

"Yes, in a sanguinary way. Does he love anyone just now?"

"No; only everyone. There never was anyone born more loving or more lovable than Jon."

"Being your boy, Irene."

At this moment little Jon, lying along a branch high above them, brought them down with two peas; but that fragment of talk lodged, thick, in his small gizzard. Loving, lovable, imaginative, sanguinary!

The leaves also were thick by now, and it was time for his birthday, which, occurring every year on the twelfth of May, was always memorable for his chosen dinner of sweetbread, mushrooms, macaroons, and ginger beer.

Between that eighth birthday, however, and the afternoon when he stood in the July radiance at the turning of the stairway, several important things had happened.

"Da," worn out by washing his knees, or moved by that mysterious instinct which forces even nurses to desert their nurslings, left the very day after his birthday in floods of tears "to be married" – of all things – "to a man." Little Jon, from whom it had been kept, was inconsolable for an afternoon. It ought not to have been kept from him! Two large boxes of soldiers and some artillery, together with The Young Buglers, which had been among his birthday presents, cooperated with his grief in a sort of conversion, and instead of seeking adventures in person and risking his own life, he began to play imaginative games, in which he risked the lives of countless tin soldiers, marbles, stones and beans. Of these forms of "chair a canon" he made collections, and, using them alternately, fought the Peninsular, the Seven Years, the Thirty Years, and other wars, about which he had been reading of late in a big History of Europe which had been his grandfather's. He altered them to suit his genius, and fought them all over the floor in his day nursery, so that nobody could come in, for fearing of disturbing Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, or treading on an army of Austrians. Because of the sound of the word he was passionately addicted to the Austrians, and finding there were so few battles in which they were successful he had to invent them in his games. His favourite generals were Prince Eugene, the Archduke Charles and Wallenstein. Tilly and Mack ("music-hall turns" he heard his father call them one day, whatever that might mean) one really could not love very much, Austrian though they were. For euphonic reasons, too, he doted on Turenne.

This phase, which caused his parents anxiety, because it kept him indoors when he ought to have been out, lasted through May and half of June, till his father killed it by bringing home to him Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. When he read those books something happened in him, and he went out of doors again in passionate quest of a river. There being none on the premises at Robin Hill, he had to make one out of the pond, which fortunately had water lilies, dragonflies, gnats, bullrushes, and three small willow trees. On this pond, after his father and Garratt had ascertained by sounding that it had a reliable bottom and was nowhere more than two feet deep, he was allowed a little collapsible canoe, in which he spent hours and hours paddling, and lying down out of sight of Indian Joe and other enemies. On the shore of the pond, too, he built himself a wigwam about four feet square, of old biscuit tins, roofed in by boughs. In this he would make little fires, and cook the birds he had not shot with his gun, hunting in the coppice and fields, or the fish he did not catch in the pond because there were none. This occupied the rest of June and that July, when his father and mother were away in Ireland. He led a lonely life of "make believe" during those five weeks of summer weather, with gun, wigwam, water and canoe; and, however hard his active little brain tried to keep the sense of beauty away, she did creep in on him for a second now and then, perching on the wing of a dragon-fly, glistening on the water lilies, or brushing his eyes with her blue as he lay on his back in ambush.

"Auntie" June, who had been left in charge, had a "grown-up" in the house, with a cough and a large piece of putty which he was making into a face; so she hardly ever came down to see him in the pond. Once, however, she brought with her two other "grown-ups." Little Jon, who happened to have painted his naked self bright blue and yellow in stripes out of his father's water-colour box, and put some duck's feathers in his hair, saw them coming, and – ambushed himself among the willows. As he had foreseen, they came at once to his wigwam and knelt down to look inside, so that with a blood-curdling yell he was able to take the scalps of "Auntie" June and the woman "grown-up" in an almost complete manner before they kissed him. The names of the two grown-ups were "Auntie" Holly and "Uncle" Val, who had a brown face and a little limp, and laughed at him terribly. He took a fancy to "Auntie" Holly, who seemed to be a sister too; but they both went away the same afternoon and he did not see them again. Three days before his father and mother were to come home "Auntie" June also went off in a great hurry, taking the "grown-up" who coughed and his piece of putty; and Mademoiselle said: "Poor man, he was veree ill. I forbid you to go into his room, Jon." Little Jon, who rarely did things merely because he was told not to, refrained from going, though he was bored and lonely. In truth the day of the pond was past, and he was filled to the brim of his soul with restlessness and the want of something – not a tree, not a gun – something soft. Those last two days had seemed months in spite of Cast Up by the Sea, wherein he was reading about Mother Lee and her terrible wrecking bonfire. He had gone up and down the stairs perhaps a hundred times in those two days, and often from the day nursery, where he slept now, had stolen into his mother's room, looked at everything, without touching, and on into the dressing-room; and standing on one leg beside the bath, like Slingsby, had whispered:

"Ho, ho, ho! Dog my cats!" mysteriously, to bring luck. Then, stealing back, he had opened his mother's wardrobe, and taken a long sniff which seemed to bring him nearer to – he didn't know what.

He had done this just before he stood in the streak of sunlight, debating in which of the several ways he should slide down the banisters. They all seemed silly, and in a sudden languor he began descending the steps one by one. During that descent he could remember his father quite distinctly – the short grey beard, the deep eyes twinkling, the furrow between them, the funny smile, the thin figure which always seemed so tall to little Jon; but his mother he couldn't see. All that represented her was something swaying with two dark eyes looking back at him; and the scent of her wardrobe.

Bella was in the hall, drawing aside the big curtains, and opening the front door. Little Jon said, wheedling,

"Bella!"

"Yes, Master Jon."

"Do let's have tea under the oak tree when they come; I know they'd like it best."

"You mean you'd like it best."

Little Jon considered.

"No, they would, to please me."

Bella smiled. "Very well, I'll take it out if you'll stay quiet here and not get into mischief before they come."

Little Jon sat down on the bottom step, and nodded. Bella came close, and looked him over.

"Get up!" she said.

Little Jon got up. She scrutinized him behind; he was not green, and his knees seemed clean.

"All right!" she said. "My! Aren't you brown? Give me a kiss!"

And little Jon received a peck on his hair.

"What jam?" he asked. "I'm so tired of waiting."

"Gooseberry and strawberry."

Num! They were his favourites!

When she was gone he sat still for quite a minute. It was quiet in the big hall open to its East end so that he could see one of his trees, a brig sailing very slowly across the upper lawn. In the

outer hall shadows were slanting from the pillars. Little Jon got up, jumped one of them, and walked round the clump of iris plants which filled the pool of grey-white marble in the centre. The flowers were pretty, but only smelled a very little. He stood in the open doorway and looked out. Suppose! – suppose they didn't come! He had waited so long that he felt he could not bear that, and his attention slid at once from such finality to the dust motes in the bluish sunlight coming in: Thrusting his hand up, he tried to catch some. Bella ought to have dusted that piece of air! But perhaps they weren't dust – only what sunlight was made of, and he looked to see whether the sunlight out of doors was the same. It was not. He had said he would stay quiet in the hall, but he simply couldn't any more; and crossing the gravel of the drive he lay down on the grass beyond. Pulling six daisies he named them carefully, Sir Lamorac, Sir Tristram, Sir Lancelot, Sir Palimedes, Sir Bors, Sir Gawain, and fought them in couples till only Sir Lamorac, whom he had selected for a specially stout stalk, had his head on, and even he, after three encounters, looked worn and waggly. A beetle was moving slowly in the grass, which almost wanted cutting. Every blade was a small tree, round whose trunk the beetle had to glide. Little Jon stretched out Sir Lamorac, feet foremost, and stirred the creature up. It scuttled painfully. Little Jon laughed, lost interest, and sighed. His heart felt empty. He turned over and lay on his back. There was a scent of honey from the lime trees in flower, and in the sky the blue was beautiful, with a few white clouds which looked and perhaps tasted like lemon ice. He could hear Bob playing: "Way down upon de Suwannee ribber" on his concertina, and it made him nice and sad. He turned over again and put his ear to the ground – Indians could hear things coming ever so far – but he could hear nothing – only the concertina! And almost instantly he did hear a grinding sound, a faint toot. Yes! it was a car – coming – coming! Up he jumped. Should he wait in the porch, or rush upstairs, and as they came in, shout: "Look!" and slide slowly down the banisters, head foremost? Should he? The car turned in at the drive. It was too late! And he only waited, jumping up and down in his excitement. The car came quickly, whirred, and stopped. His father got out, exactly like life. He bent down and little Jon bobbed up – they bumped. His father said,

"Bless us! Well, old man, you are brown!" Just as he would; and the sense of expectation – of something wanted – bubbled unextinguished in little Jon. Then, with a long, shy look he saw his mother, in a blue dress, with a blue motor scarf over her cap and hair, smiling. He jumped as high as ever he could, twined his legs behind her back, and hugged. He heard her gasp, and felt her hugging back. His eyes, very dark blue just then, looked into hers, very dark brown, till her lips closed on his eyebrow, and, squeezing with all his might, he heard her creak and laugh, and say:

"You are strong, Jon!"

He slid down at that, and rushed into the hall, dragging her by the hand.

While he was eating his jam beneath the oak tree, he noticed things about his mother that he had never seemed to see before, her cheeks for instance were creamy, there were silver threads in her dark goldy hair, her throat had no knob in it like Bella's, and she went in and out softly. He noticed, too, some little lines running away from the corners of her eyes, and a nice darkness under them. She was ever so beautiful, more beautiful than "Da" or Mademoiselle, or "Auntie" June or even "Auntie" Holly, to whom he had taken a fancy; even more beautiful than Bella, who had pink cheeks and came out too suddenly in places. This new beautifulness of his mother had a kind of particular importance, and he ate less than he had expected to.

When tea was over his father wanted him to walk round the gardens. He had a long conversation with his father about things in general, avoiding his private life – Sir Lamorac, the Austrians, and the emptiness he had felt these last three days, now so suddenly filled up. His father told him of a place called Glensofantrim, where he and his mother had been; and of the little people who came out of the ground there when it was very quiet. Little Jon came to a halt, with his heels apart.

"Do you really believe they do, Daddy?" "No, Jon, but I thought you might."

"Why?"

"You're younger than I; and they're fairies." Little Jon squared the dimple in his chin.

"I don't believe in fairies. I never see any." "Ha!" said his father.

"Does Mum?"

His father smiled his funny smile.

"No; she only sees Pan."

"What's Pan?"

"The Goaty God who skips about in wild and beautiful places."

"Was he in Glensofantrim?"

"Mum said so."

Little Jon took his heels up, and led on.

"Did you see him?"

"No; I only saw Venus Anadyomene."

Little Jon reflected; Venus was in his book about the Greeks and Trojans. Then Anna was her Christian and Dyomene her surname?

But it appeared, on inquiry, that it was one word, which meant rising from the foam.

"Did she rise from the foam in Glensofantrim?"

"Yes; every day."

"What is she like, Daddy?"

"Like Mum."

"Oh! Then she must be…" but he stopped at that, rushed at a wall, scrambled up, and promptly scrambled down again. The discovery that his mother was beautiful was one which he felt must absolutely be kept to himself. His father's cigar, however, took so long to smoke, that at last he was compelled to say:

"I want to see what Mum's brought home. Do you mind, Daddy?"

He pitched the motive low, to absolve him from unmanliness, and was a little disconcerted when his father looked at him right through, heaved an important sigh, and answered:

"All right, old man, you go and love her."

He went, with a pretence of slowness, and then rushed, to make up. He entered her bedroom from his own, the door being open. She was still kneeling before a trunk, and he stood close to her, quite still.

She knelt up straight, and said:

"Well, Jon?"

"I thought I'd just come and see."

Having given and received another hug, he mounted the window-seat, and tucking his legs up under him watched her unpack. He derived a pleasure from the operation such as he had not yet known, partly because she was taking out things which looked suspicious, and partly because he liked to look at her. She moved differently from anybody else, especially from Bella; she was certainly the refinedest-looking person he had ever seen. She finished the trunk at last, and knelt down in front of him.

"Have you missed us, Jon?"

Little Jon nodded, and having thus admitted his feelings, continued to nod.

"But you had 'Auntie' June?"

"Oh! she had a man with a cough."

His mother's face changed, and looked almost angry. He added hastily:

"He was a poor man, Mum; he coughed awfully; I – I liked him."

His mother put her hands behind his waist.

"You like everybody, Jon?"

Little Jon considered.

"Up to a point," he said: "Auntie June took me to church one Sunday."

"To church? Oh!"

"She wanted to see how it would affect me." "And did it?"

"Yes. I came over all funny, so she took me home again very quick. I wasn't sick after all. I went to bed and had hot brandy and water, and read The Boys of Beechwood. It was scrumptious."

His mother bit her lip.

"When was that?"

"Oh! about – a long time ago – I wanted her to take me again, but she wouldn't. You and Daddy never go to church, do you?"

"No, we don't."

"Why don't you?"

His mother smiled.

"Well, dear, we both of us went when we were little. Perhaps we went when we were too little."

"I see," said little Jon, "it's dangerous."

"You shall judge for yourself about all those things as you grow up."

Little Jon replied in a calculating manner:

"I don't want to grow up, much. I don't want to go to school." A sudden overwhelming desire to say something more, to say what he really felt, turned him red. "I – I want to stay with you, and be your lover, Mum."

Then with an instinct to improve the situation, he added quickly "I don't want to go to bed to-night, either. I'm simply tired of going to bed, every night."

"Have you had any more nightmares?"

"Only about one. May I leave the door open into your room to-night, Mum?"

"Yes, just a little." Little Jon heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

"What did you see in Glensofantrim?"

"Nothing but beauty, darling."

"What exactly is beauty?"

"What exactly is – Oh! Jon, that's a poser."

"Can I see it, for instance?" His mother got up, and sat beside him. "You do, every day. The sky is beautiful, the stars, and moonlit nights, and then the birds, the flowers, the trees – they're all beautiful. Look out of the window – there's beauty for you, Jon."

"Oh! yes, that's the view. Is that all?"

"All? no. The sea is wonderfully beautiful, and the waves, with their foam flying back."

"Did you rise from it every day, Mum?"

His mother smiled. "Well, we bathed."

Little Jon suddenly reached out and caught her neck in his hands.

"I know," he said mysteriously, "you're it, really, and all the rest is make-believe."

She sighed, laughed, said: "Oh! Jon!"

Little Jon said critically:

"Do you think Bella beautiful, for instance? I hardly do."

"Bella is young; that's something."

"But you look younger, Mum. If you bump against Bella she hurts."

"I don't believe 'Da' was beautiful, when I come to think of it; and Mademoiselle's almost ugly."

"Mademoiselle has a very nice face." "Oh! yes; nice. I love your little rays, Mum."

"Rays?"

Little Jon put his finger to the outer corner of her eye.

"Oh! Those? But they're a sign of age."

"They come when you smile."

"But they usen't to."

"Oh! well, I like them. Do you love me, Mum?"

"I do – I do love you, darling."

"Ever so?"

"Ever so!"

"More than I thought you did?"

"Much – much more."

"Well, so do I; so that makes it even."

Conscious that he had never in his life so given himself away, he felt a sudden reaction to the manliness of Sir Lamorac, Dick Needham, Huck Finn, and other heroes.

"Shall I show you a thing or two?" he said; and slipping out of her arms, he stood on his head. Then, fired by her obvious admiration, he mounted the bed, and threw himself head foremost from his feet on to his back, without touching anything with his hands. He did this several times.

That evening, having inspected what they had brought, he stayed up to dinner, sitting between them at the little round table they used when they were alone. He was extremely excited. His mother wore a French-grey dress, with creamy lace made out of little scriggly roses, round her neck, which was browner than the lace. He kept looking at her, till at last his father's funny smile made him suddenly attentive to his slice of pineapple. It was later than he had ever stayed up, when he went to bed. His mother went up with him, and he undressed very slowly so as to keep her there. When at last he had nothing on but his pyjamas, he said:

"Promise you won't go while I say my prayers!"

"I promise."

Kneeling down and plunging his face into the bed, little Jon hurried up, under his breath, opening one eye now and then, to see her standing perfectly still with a smile on her face. "Our Father" – so went his last prayer, "which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Mum, thy Kingdom Mum – on Earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily Mum and forgive us our trespasses on earth as it is in heaven and trespass against us, for thine is the evil the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amum! Look out!" He sprang, and for a long minute remained in her arms. Once in bed, he continued to hold her hand.

"You won't shut the door any more than that, will you? Are you going to be long, Mum?"

"I must go down and play to Daddy."

"Oh! well, I shall hear you."

"I hope not; you must go to sleep."

"I can sleep any night."

"Well, this is just a night like any other."

"Oh! no – it's extra special."

"On extra special nights one always sleeps soundest."

"But if I go to sleep, Mum, I shan't hear you come up."

"Well, when I do, I'll come in and give you a kiss, then if you're awake you'll know, and if you're not you'll still know you've had one."

Little Jon sighed, "All right!" he said: "I suppose I must put up with that. Mum?"

"Yes?"

"What was her name that Daddy believes in? Venus Anna Diomedes?"

"Oh! my angel! Anadyomene."

"Yes! but I like my name for you much better."

"What is yours, Jon?"

Little Jon answered shyly:

"Guinevere! it's out of the Round Table – I've only just thought of it, only of course her hair was down."

His mother's eyes, looking past him, seemed to float.

"You won't forget to come, Mum?"

"Not if you'll go to sleep."

"That's a bargain, then." And little Jon screwed up his eyes.

He felt her lips on his forehead, heard her footsteps; opened his eyes to see her gliding through the doorway, and, sighing, screwed them up again.

Then Time began.

For some ten minutes of it he tried loyally to sleep, counting a great number of thistles in a row, "Da's" old recipe for bringing slumber. He seemed to have been hours counting. It must, he thought, be nearly time for her to come up now. He threw the bedclothes back. "I'm hot!" he said, and his voice sounded funny in the darkness, like someone else's. Why didn't she come? He sat up. He must look! He got out of bed, went to the window and pulled the curtain a slice aside. It wasn't dark, but he couldn't tell whether because of daylight or the moon, which was very big. It had a funny, wicked face, as if laughing at him, and he did not want to look at it. Then, remembering that his mother had said moonlit nights were beautiful, he continued to stare out in a general way. The trees threw thick shadows, the lawn looked like spilt milk, and a long, long way he could see; oh! very far; right over the world, and it all looked different and swimmy. There was a lovely smell, too, in his open window.

'I wish I had a dove like Noah!' he thought.

"The moony moon was round and bright, It shone and shone and made it light."

After that rhyme, which came into his head all at once, he became conscious of music, very soft-lovely! Mum playing! He bethought himself of a macaroon he had, laid up in his chest of drawers, and, getting it, came back to the window. He leaned out, now munching, now holding his jaws to hear the music better. "Da" used to say that angels played on harps in heaven; but it wasn't half so lovely as Mum playing in the moony night, with him eating a macaroon. A cockchafer buzzed by, a moth flew in his face, the music stopped, and little Jon drew his head in. She must be coming! He didn't want to be found awake. He got back into bed and pulled the clothes nearly over his head; but he had left a streak of moonlight coming in. It fell across the floor, near the foot of the bed, and he watched it moving ever so slowly towards him, as if it were alive. The music began again, but he could only just hear it now; sleepy music, pretty – sleepy – music – sleepy – slee…

And time slipped by, the music rose, fell, ceased; the moonbeam crept towards his face. Little Jon turned in his sleep till he lay on his back, with one brown fist still grasping the bedclothes. The corners of his eyes twitched – he had begun to dream. He dreamed he was drinking milk out of a pan that was the moon, opposite a great black cat which watched him with a funny smile like his father's. He heard it whisper: "Don't drink too much!" It was the cat's milk, of course, and he put out his hand amicably to stroke the creature; but it was no longer there; the pan had become a bed, in which he was lying, and when he tried to get out he couldn't find the edge; he couldn't find it – he – he – couldn't get out! It was dreadful!

He whimpered in his sleep. The bed had begun to go round too; it was outside him and inside him; going round and round, and getting fiery, and Mother Lee out of Cast up by the Sea was stirring it! Oh! so horrible she looked! Faster and faster! – till he and the bed and Mother Lee and the moon and the cat were all one wheel going round and round and up and up – awful – awful – awful!

He shrieked.

A voice saying: "Darling, darling!" got through the wheel, and he awoke, standing on his bed, with his eyes wide open.

There was his mother, with her hair like Guinevere's, and, clutching her, he buried his face in it.

"Oh! oh!"

"It's all right, treasure. You're awake now. There! There! It's nothing!"

But little Jon continued to say: "Oh! oh!"

Her voice went on, velvety in his ear:

"It was the moonlight, sweetheart, coming on your face."

Little Jon burbled into her nightgown

"You said it was beautiful. Oh!"

"Not to sleep in, Jon. Who let it in? Did you draw the curtains?"

"I wanted to see the time; I – I looked out, I – I heard you playing, Mum; I – I ate my macaroon." But he was growing slowly comforted; and the instinct to excuse his fear revived within him.

"Mother Lee went round in me and got all fiery," he mumbled.

"Well, Jon, what can you expect if you eat macaroons after you've gone to bed?"

"Only one, Mum; it made the music ever so more beautiful. I was waiting for you – I nearly thought it was to-morrow."

"My ducky, it's only just eleven now."

Little Jon was silent, rubbing his nose on her neck.

"Mum, is Daddy in your room?"

"Not to-night."

"Can I come?"

"If you wish, my precious."

Half himself again, little Jon drew back.

"You look different, Mum; ever so younger."

"It's my hair, darling."

Little Jon laid hold of it, thick, dark gold, with a few silver threads.

"I like it," he said: "I like you best of all like this."

Taking her hand, he had begun dragging her towards the door. He shut it as they passed, with a sigh of relief.

"Which side of the bed do you like, Mum?"

"The left side."

"All right."

Wasting no time, giving her no chance to change her mind, little Jon got into the bed, which seemed much softer than his own. He heaved another sigh, screwed his head into the pillow and lay examining the battle of chariots and swords and spears which always went on outside blankets, where the little hairs stood up against the light.

"It wasn't anything, really, was it?" he said.

From before her glass his mother answered:

"Nothing but the moon and your imagination heated up. You mustn't get so excited, Jon."

But, still not quite in possession of his nerves, little Jon answered boastfully:

"I wasn't afraid, really, of course!" And again he lay watching the spears and chariots. It all seemed very long.

"Oh! Mum, do hurry up!"

"Darling, I have to plait my hair."

"Oh! not to-night. You'll only have to unplait it again to-morrow. I'm sleepy now; if you don't come, I shan't be sleepy soon."

His mother stood up white and flowey before the winged mirror: he could see three of her, with her neck turned and her hair bright under the light, and her dark eyes smiling. It was unnecessary, and he said:

"Do come, Mum; I'm waiting."

"Very well, my love, I'll come."

Little Jon closed his eyes. Everything was turning out most satisfactory, only she must hurry up! He felt the bed shake, she was getting in. And, still with his eyes closed, he said sleepily: "It's nice, isn't it?"

He heard her voice say something, felt her lips touching his nose, and, snuggling up beside her who lay awake and loved him with her thoughts, he fell into the dreamless sleep, which rounded off his past.

# TO LET

*"From out the fatal loins of those two foes*
*A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life."*

*– Romeo and Juliet.*

## TO CHARLES SCRIBNER

# PART I

## I. – ENCOUNTER

Soames Forsyte emerged from the Knightsbridge Hotel, where he was staying, in the afternoon of the 12th of May, 1920, with the intention of visiting a collection of pictures in a Gallery off Cork Street, and looking into the Future. He walked. Since the War he never took a cab if he could help it. Their drivers were, in his view, an uncivil lot, though now that the War was over and supply beginning to exceed demand again, getting more civil in accordance with the custom of human nature. Still, he had not forgiven them, deeply identifying them with gloomy memories, and now, dimly, like all members, of their class, with revolution. The considerable anxiety he had passed through during the War, and the more considerable anxiety he had since undergone in the Peace, had produced psychological consequences in a tenacious nature. He had, mentally, so frequently experienced ruin, that he had ceased to believe in its material probability. Paying away four thousand a year in income and super tax, one could not very well be worse off! A fortune of a quarter of a million, encumbered only by a wife and one daughter, and very diversely invested, afforded substantial guarantee even against that "wildcat notion" a levy on capital. And as to confiscation of war profits, he was entirely in favour of it, for he had none, and "serve the beggars right!" The price of pictures, moreover, had, if anything, gone up, and he had done better with his collection since the War began than ever before. Air-raids, also, had acted beneficially on a spirit congenitally cautious, and hardened a character already dogged. To be in danger of being entirely dispersed inclined one to be less apprehensive of the more partial dispersions involved in levies and taxation, while the habit of condemning the impudence of the Germans had led naturally to condemning that of Labour, if not openly at least in the sanctuary of his soul.

He walked. There was, moreover, time to spare, for Fleur was to meet him at the Gallery at four o'clock, and it was as yet but half-past two. It was good for him to walk – his liver was a little constricted, and his nerves rather on edge. His wife was always out when she was in Town, and his daughter would flibberty-gibbet all over the place like most young women since the War. Still, he must be thankful that she had been too young to do anything in that War itself. Not, of course, that he had not supported the War from its inception, with all his soul, but between that and supporting it with the bodies of his wife and daughter, there had been a gap fixed by something old-fashioned within him which abhorred emotional extravagance. He had, for instance, strongly objected to Annette, so attractive, and in 1914 only thirty-four, going to her native France, her "chere patrie" as, under the stimulus of war, she had begun to call it, to nurse her "braves poilus," forsooth! Ruining her health and her looks! As if she were really a nurse! He had put a stopper on it. Let her do needlework for them at home, or knit! She had not gone, therefore, and had never been quite the same woman since. A bad tendency of hers to mock at him, not openly, but in continual little ways, had grown. As for Fleur, the War had resolved the vexed problem whether or not she should go to school. She was better away from her mother in her war mood, from the chance of air-raids, and the impetus to do extravagant things; so he had placed her in a seminary as far West as had seemed to him compatible with excellence, and had missed her horribly. Fleur! He had never regretted the somewhat outlandish name by which at her birth he had decided so suddenly to call her – marked concession though it had been to the French. Fleur! A pretty name – a pretty child! But restless – too restless; and wilful! Knowing her power too over her father! Soames often reflected on the mistake it was to dote on his daughter. To get old and dote! Sixty-five! He was getting on; but he didn't feel it, for, fortunately perhaps, considering Annette's youth and good looks, his second marriage had turned out a cool affair. He had known but one real passion in his life – for that first wife of his – Irene. Yes, and that

fellow, his cousin Jolyon, who had gone off with her, was looking very shaky, they said. No wonder, at seventy-two, after twenty years of a third marriage!

Soames paused a moment in his march to lean over the railings of the Row. A suitable spot for reminiscence, half-way between that house in Park Lane which had seen his birth and his parents' deaths, and the little house in Montpellier Square where thirty-five years ago he had enjoyed his first edition of matrimony. Now, after twenty years of his second edition, that old tragedy seemed to him like a previous existence – which had ended when Fleur was born in place of the son he had hoped for. For many years he had ceased regretting, even vaguely, the son who had not been born; Fleur filled the bill in his heart. After all, she bore his name; and he was not looking forward at all to the time when she would change it. Indeed, if he ever thought of such a calamity, it was seasoned by the vague feeling that he could make her rich enough to purchase perhaps and extinguish the name of the fellow who married her – why not, since, as it seemed, women were equal to men nowadays? And Soames, secretly convinced that they were not, passed his curved hand over his face vigorously, till it reached the comfort of his chin. Thanks to abstemious habits, he had not grown fat and gabby; his nose was pale and thin, his grey moustache close-clipped, his eyesight unimpaired. A slight stoop closened and corrected the expansion given to his face by the heightening of his forehead in the recession of his grey hair. Little change had Time wrought in the "warmest" of the young Forsytes, as the last of the old Forsytes – Timothy-now in his hundred and first year, would have phrased it.

The shade from the plane-trees fell on his neat Homburg hat; he had given up top hats – it was no use attracting attention to wealth in days like these. Plane-trees! His thoughts travelled sharply to Madrid – the Easter before the War, when, having to make up his mind about that Goya picture, he had taken a voyage of discovery to study the painter on his spot. The fellow had impressed him – great range, real genius! Highly as the chap ranked, he would rank even higher before they had finished with him. The second Goya craze would be greater even than the first; oh, yes! And he had bought. On that visit he had – as never before – commissioned a copy of a fresco painting called "La Vendimia," wherein was the figure of a girl with an arm akimbo, who had reminded him of his daughter. He had it now in the Gallery at Mapledurham, and rather poor it was – you couldn't copy Goya. He would still look at it, however, if his daughter were not there, for the sake of something irresistibly reminiscent in the light, erect balance of the figure, the width between the arching eyebrows, the eager dreaming of the dark eyes. Curious that Fleur should have dark eyes, when his own were grey – no pure Forsyte had brown eyes – and her mother's blue! But of course her grandmother Lamotte's eyes were dark as treacle!

He began to walk on again toward Hyde Park Corner. No greater change in all England than in the Row! Born almost within hail of it, he could remember it from 1860 on. Brought there as a child between the crinolines to stare at tight-trousered dandies in whiskers, riding with a cavalry seat; to watch the doffing of curly-brimmed and white top hats; the leisurely air of it all, and the little bow-legged man in a long red waistcoat who used to come among the fashion with dogs on several strings, and try to sell one to his mother: King Charles spaniels, Italian greyhounds, affectionate to her crinoline – you never saw them now. You saw no quality of any sort, indeed, just working people sitting in dull rows with nothing to stare at but a few young bouncing females in pot hats, riding astride, or desultory Colonials charging up and down on dismal-looking hacks; with, here and there, little girls on ponies, or old gentlemen jogging their livers, or an orderly trying a great galumphing cavalry horse; no thoroughbreds, no grooms, no bowing, no scraping, no gossip – nothing; only the trees the same – the trees indifferent to the generations and declensions of mankind. A democratic England – dishevelled, hurried, noisy, and seemingly without an apex. And that something fastidious in the soul of Soames turned over within him. Gone forever, the close borough of rank and polish! Wealth there was – oh, yes! wealth – he himself was a richer man than his father had ever been; but manners, flavour, quality, all gone, engulfed in one vast, ugly, shoulder-rubbing, petrol-smelling Cheerio. Little half-beaten pockets of gentility and caste lurking here and there, dispersed and chetif,

as Annette would say; but nothing ever again firm and coherent to look up to. And into this new hurly-burly of bad manners and loose morals his daughter – flower of his life – was flung! And when those Labour chaps got power – if they ever did – the worst was yet to come.

He passed out under the archway, at last no longer – thank goodness! – disfigured by the gungrey of its search-light. 'They'd better put a search-light on to where they're all going,' he thought, 'and light up their precious democracy!' And he directed his steps along the Club fronts of Piccadilly. George Forsyte, of course, would be sitting in the bay window of the Iseeum. The chap was so big now that he was there nearly all his time, like some immovable, sardonic, humorous eye noting the decline of men and things. And Soames hurried, ever constitutionally uneasy beneath his cousin's glance. George, who, as he had heard, had written a letter signed "Patriot" in the middle of the War, complaining of the Government's hysteria in docking the oats of race-horses. Yes, there he was, tall, ponderous, neat, clean-shaven, with his smooth hair, hardly thinned, smelling, no doubt, of the best hair-wash, and a pink paper in his hand. Well, he didn't change! And for perhaps the first time in his life Soames felt a kind of sympathy tapping in his waistcoat for that sardonic kinsman. With his weight, his perfectly parted hair, and bull-like gaze, he was a guarantee that the old order would take some shifting yet. He saw George move the pink paper as if inviting him to ascend – the chap must want to ask something about his property. It was still under Soames' control; for in the adoption of a sleeping partnership at that painful period twenty years back when he had divorced Irene, Soames had found himself almost insensibly retaining control of all purely Forsyte affairs.

Hesitating for just a moment, he nodded and went in. Since the death of his brother-in-law Montague Dartie, in Paris, which no one had quite known what to make of, except that it was certainly not suicide – the Iseeum Club had seemed more respectable to Soames. George, too, he knew, had sown the last of his wild oats, and was committed definitely to the joys of the table, eating only of the very best so as to keep his weight down, and owning, as he said, "just one or two old screws to give me an interest in life." He joined his cousin, therefore, in the bay window without the embarrassing sense of indiscretion he had been used to feel up there. George put out a well-kept hand.

"Haven't seen you since the War," he said. "How's your wife?"

"Thanks," said Soames coldly, "well enough."

Some hidden jest curved, for a moment, George's fleshy face, and gloated from his eye.

"That Belgian chap, Profond," he said, "is a member here now. He's a rum customer."

"Quite!" muttered Soames. "What did you want to see me about?"

"Old Timothy; he might go off the hooks at any moment. I suppose he's made his Will."

"Yes."

"Well, you or somebody ought to give him a look up – last of the old lot; he's a hundred, you know. They say he's like a mummy. Where are you goin' to put him? He ought to have a pyramid by rights."

Soames shook his head. "Highgate, the family vault."

"Well, I suppose the old girls would miss him, if he was anywhere else. They say he still takes an interest in food. He might last on, you know. Don't we get anything for the old Forsytes? Ten of them – average age eighty-eight – I worked it out. That ought to be equal to triplets."

"Is that all?" said Soames, "I must be getting on."

'You unsociable devil,' George's eyes seemed to answer. "Yes, that's all: Look him up in his mausoleum – the old chap might want to prophesy." The grin died on the rich curves of his face, and he added: "Haven't you attorneys invented a way yet of dodging this damned income tax? It hits the fixed inherited income like the very deuce. I used to have two thousand five hundred a year; now I've got a beggarly fifteen hundred, and the price of living doubled."

"Ah!" murmured Soames, "the turf's in danger."

Over George's face moved a gleam of sardonic self-defence.

"Well," he said, "they brought me up to do nothing, and here I am in the sear and yellow, getting poorer every day. These Labour chaps mean to have the lot before they've done. What are you going to do for a living when it comes? I shall work a six-hour day teaching politicians how to see a joke. Take my tip, Soames; go into Parliament, make sure of your four hundred – and employ me."

And, as Soames retired, he resumed his seat in the bay window.

Soames moved along Piccadilly deep in reflections excited by his cousin's words. He himself had always been a worker and a saver, George always a drone and a spender; and yet, if confiscation once began, it was he – the worker and the saver – who would be looted! That was the negation of all virtue, the overturning of all Forsyte principles. Could civilization be built on any other? He did not think so. Well, they wouldn't confiscate his pictures, for they wouldn't know their worth. But what would they be worth, if these maniacs once began to milk capital? A drug on the market. 'I don't care about myself,' he thought; 'I could live on five hundred a year, and never know the difference, at my age.' But Fleur! This fortune, so widely invested, these treasures so carefully chosen and amassed, were all for – her. And if it should turn out that he couldn't give or leave them to her – well, life had no meaning, and what was the use of going in to look at this crazy, futuristic stuff with the view of seeing whether it had any future?

Arriving at the Gallery off Cork Street, however, he paid his shilling, picked up a catalogue, and entered. Some ten persons were prowling round. Soames took steps and came on what looked to him like a lamp-post bent by collision with a motor omnibus. It was advanced some three paces from the wall, and was described in his catalogue as "Jupiter." He examined it with curiosity, having recently turned some of his attention to sculpture. 'If that's Jupiter,' he thought, 'I wonder what Juno's like.' And suddenly he saw her, opposite. She appeared to him like nothing so much as a pump with two handles, lightly clad in snow. He was still gazing at her, when two of the prowlers halted on his left. "Epatant!" he heard one say.

"Jargon!" growled Soames to himself.

The other's boyish voice replied

"Missed it, old bean; he's pulling your leg. When Jove and Juno created he them, he was saying: 'I'll see how much these fools will swallow.' And they've lapped up the lot."

"You young duffer! Vospovitch is an innovator. Don't you see that he's brought satire into sculpture? The future of plastic art, of music, painting, and even architecture, has set in satiric. It was bound to. People are tired – the bottom's tumbled out of sentiment."

"Well, I'm quite equal to taking a little interest in beauty. I was through the War. You've dropped your handkerchief, sir."

Soames saw a handkerchief held out in front of him. He took it with some natural suspicion, and approached it to his nose. It had the right scent – of distant Eau de Cologne – and his initials in a corner. Slightly reassured, he raised his eyes to the young man's face. It had rather fawn-like ears, a laughing mouth, with half a toothbrush growing out of it on each side, and small lively eyes, above a normally dressed appearance.

"Thank you," he said; and moved by a sort of irritation, added: "Glad to hear you like beauty; that's rare, nowadays."

"I dote on it," said the young man; "but you and I are the last of the old guard, sir."

Soames smiled.

"If you really care for pictures," he said, "here's my card. I can show you some quite good ones any Sunday, if you're down the river and care to look in."

"Awfully nice of you, sir. I'll drop in like a bird. My name's Mont-Michael." And he took off his hat.

Soames, already regretting his impulse, raised his own slightly in response, with a downward look at the young man's companion, who had a purple tie, dreadful little sluglike whiskers, and a scornful look – as if he were a poet!

It was the first indiscretion he had committed for so long that he went and sat down in an alcove. What had possessed him to give his card to a rackety young fellow, who went about with a thing like that? And Fleur, always at the back of his thoughts, started out like a filigree figure from a clock when the hour strikes. On the screen opposite the alcove was a large canvas with a great many square tomato-coloured blobs on it, and nothing else, so far as Soames could see from where he sat. He looked at his catalogue: "No. 32 'The Future Town' – Paul Post." 'I suppose that's satiric too,' he thought. 'What a thing!' But his second impulse was more cautious. It did not do to condemn hurriedly. There had been those stripey, streaky creations of Monet's, which had turned out such trumps; and then the stippled school; and Gauguin. Why, even since the Post-Impressionists there had been one or two painters not to be sneezed at. During the thirty-eight years of his connoisseur's life, indeed, he had marked so many "movements," seen the tides of taste and technique so ebb and flow, that there was really no telling anything except that there was money to be made out of every change of fashion. This too might quite well be a case where one must subdue primordial instinct, or lose the market. He got up and stood before the picture, trying hard to see it with the eyes of other people. Above the tomato blobs was what he took to be a sunset, till some one passing said: "He's got the airplanes wonderfully, don't you think!" Below the tomato blobs was a band of white with vertical black stripes, to which he could assign no meaning whatever, till some one else came by, murmuring: "What expression he gets with his foreground!" Expression? Of what? Soames went back to his seat. The thing was "rich," as his father would have said, and he wouldn't give a damn for it. Expression! Ah! they were all Expressionists now, he had heard, on the Continent. So it was coming here too, was it? He remembered the first wave of influenza in 1887 – or '8 – hatched in China, so they said. He wondered where this – this Expressionism had been hatched. The thing was a regular disease!

He had become conscious of a woman and a youth standing between him and the "Future Town." Their backs were turned; but very suddenly Soames put his catalogue before his face, and drawing his hat forward, gazed through the slit between. No mistaking that back, elegant as ever though the hair above had gone grey. Irene! His divorced wife – Irene! And this, no doubt, was – her son – by that fellow Jolyon Forsyte – their boy, six months older than his own girl! And mumbling over in his mind the bitter days of his divorce, he rose to get out of sight, but quickly sat down again. She had turned her head to speak to her boy; her profile was still so youthful that it made her grey hair seem powdery, as if fancy-dressed; and her lips were smiling as Soames, first possessor of them, had never seen them smile. Grudgingly he admitted her still beautiful and in figure almost as young as ever. And how that boy smiled back at her! Emotion squeezed Soames' heart. The sight infringed his sense of justice. He grudged her that boy's smile – it went beyond what Fleur gave him, and it was undeserved. Their son might have been his son; Fleur might have been her daughter, if she had kept straight! He lowered his catalogue. If she saw him, all the better! A reminder of her conduct in the presence of her son, who probably knew nothing of it, would be a salutary touch from the finger of that Nemesis which surely must soon or late visit her! Then, half-conscious that such a thought was extravagant for a Forsyte of his age, Soames took out his watch. Past four! Fleur was late. She had gone to his niece Imogen Cardigan's, and there they would keep her smoking cigarettes and gossiping, and that. He heard the boy laugh, and say eagerly: "I say, Mum, is this by one of Auntie June's lame ducks?"

"Paul Post – I believe it is, darling."

The word produced a little shock in Soames; he had never heard her use it. And then she saw him. His eyes must have had in them something of George Forsyte's sardonic look; for her gloved hand crisped the folds of her frock, her eyebrows rose, her face went stony. She moved on.

"It is a caution," said the boy, catching her arm again.

Soames stared after them. That boy was good-looking, with a Forsyte chin, and eyes deep-grey, deep in; but with something sunny, like a glass of old sherry spilled over him; his smile perhaps, his hair. Better than they deserved – those two! They passed from his view into the next room, and

Soames continued to regard the Future Town, but saw it not. A little smile snarled up his lips. He was despising the vehemence of his own feelings after all these years. Ghosts! And yet as one grew old – was there anything but what was ghost-like left? Yes, there was Fleur! He fixed his eyes on the entrance. She was due; but she would keep him waiting, of course! And suddenly he became aware of a sort of human breeze – a short, slight form clad in a sea-green djibbah with a metal belt and a fillet binding unruly red-gold hair all streaked with grey. She was talking to the Gallery attendants, and something familiar riveted his gaze – in her eyes, her chin, her hair, her spirit – something which suggested a thin Skye terrier just before its dinner. Surely June Forsyte! His cousin June – and coming straight to his recess! She sat down beside him, deep in thought, took out a tablet, and made a pencil note. Soames sat unmoving. A confounded thing, cousinship! "Disgusting!" he heard her murmur; then, as if resenting the presence of an overhearing stranger, she looked at him. The worst had happened.

"Soames!"

Soames turned his head a very little.

"How are you?" he said. "Haven't seen you for twenty years."

"No. Whatever made you come here?"

"My sins," said Soames. "What stuff!"

"Stuff? Oh, yes – of course; it hasn't arrived yet.

"It never will," said Soames; "it must be making a dead loss."

"Of course it is."

"How d'you know?"

"It's my Gallery."

Soames sniffed from sheer surprise.

"Yours? What on earth makes you run a show like this?"

"I don't treat Art as if it were grocery."

Soames pointed to the Future Town. "Look at that! Who's going to live in a town like that, or with it on his walls?"

June contemplated the picture for a moment.

"It's a vision," she said.

"The deuce!"

There was silence, then June rose. 'Crazylooking creature!' he thought.

"Well," he said, "you'll find your young stepbrother here with a woman I used to know. If you take my advice, you'll close this exhibition."

June looked back at him. "Oh! You Forsyte!" she said, and moved on. About her light, fly-away figure, passing so suddenly away, was a look of dangerous decisions. Forsyte! Of course, he was a Forsyte! And so was she! But from the time when, as a mere girl, she brought Bosinney into his life to wreck it, he had never hit it off with June and never would! And here she was, unmarried to this day, owning a Gallery!.. And suddenly it came to Soames how little he knew now of his own family. The old aunts at Timothy's had been dead so many years; there was no clearing-house for news. What had they all done in the War? Young Roger's boy had been wounded, St. John Hayman's second son killed; young Nicholas' eldest had got an O. B. E., or whatever they gave them. They had all joined up somehow, he believed. That boy of Jolyon's and Irene's, he supposed, had been too young; his own generation, of course, too old, though Giles Hayman had driven a car for the Red Cross – and Jesse Hayman been a special constable – those "Dromios" had always been of a sporting type! As for himself, he had given a motor ambulance, read the papers till he was sick of them, passed through much anxiety, bought no clothes, lost seven pounds in weight; he didn't know what more he could have done at his age. Indeed, thinking it over, it struck him that he and his family had taken this war very differently to that affair with the Boers, which had been supposed to tax all the resources of the Empire. In that old war, of course, his nephew Val Dartie had been wounded, that fellow Jolyon's

first son had died of enteric, "the Dromios" had gone out on horses, and June had been a nurse; but all that had seemed in the nature of a portent, while in this war everybody had done "their bit," so far as he could make out, as a matter of course. It seemed to show the growth of something or other – or perhaps the decline of something else. Had the Forsytes become less individual, or more Imperial, or less provincial? Or was it simply that one hated Germans?.. Why didn't Fleur come, so that he could get away? He saw those three return together from the other room and pass back along the far side of the screen. The boy was standing before the Juno now. And, suddenly, on the other side of her, Soames saw – his daughter, with eyebrows raised, as well they might be. He could see her eyes glint sideways at the boy, and the boy look back at her. Then Irene slipped her hand through his arm, and drew him on. Soames saw him glancing round, and Fleur looking after them as the three went out.

A voice said cheerfully: "Bit thick, isn't it, sir?"

The young man who had handed him his handkerchief was again passing. Soames nodded.

"I don't know what we're coming to."

"Oh! That's all right, sir," answered the young man cheerfully; "they don't either."

Fleur's voice said: "Hallo, Father! Here you are!" precisely as if he had been keeping her waiting.

The young man, snatching off his hat, passed on.

"Well," said Soames, looking her up and down, "you're a punctual sort of young woman!"

This treasured possession of his life was of medium height and colour, with short, dark chestnut hair; her wide-apart brown eyes were set in whites so clear that they glinted when they moved, and yet in repose were almost dreamy under very white, black-lashed lids, held over them in a sort of suspense. She had a charming profile, and nothing of her father in her face save a decided chin. Aware that his expression was softening as he looked at her, Soames frowned to preserve the unemotionalism proper to a Forsyte. He knew she was only too inclined to take advantage of his weakness.

Slipping her hand under his arm, she said:

"Who was that?"

"He picked up my handkerchief. We talked about the pictures."

"You're not going to buy that, Father?"

"No," said Soames grimly; "nor that Juno you've been looking at."

Fleur dragged at his arm. "Oh! Let's go! It's a ghastly show."

In the doorway they passed the young man called Mont and his partner. But Soames had hung out a board marked "Trespassers will be prosecuted," and he barely acknowledged the young fellow's salute.

"Well," he said in the street, "whom did you meet at Imogen's?"

"Aunt Winifred, and that Monsieur Profond."

"Oh!" muttered Soames; "that chap! What does your aunt see in him?"

"I don't know. He looks pretty deep – mother says she likes him."

Soames grunted.

"Cousin Val and his wife were there, too."

"What!" said Soames. "I thought they were back in South Africa."

"Oh, no! They've sold their farm. Cousin Val is going to train race-horses on the Sussex Downs. They've got a jolly old manor-house; they asked me down there."

Soames coughed: the news was distasteful to him. "What's his wife like now?"

"Very quiet, but nice, I think."

Soames coughed again. "He's a rackety chap, your Cousin Val."

"Oh! no, Father; they're awfully devoted. I promised to go – Saturday to Wednesday next."

"Training race-horses!" said Soames. It was extravagant, but not the reason for his distaste. Why the deuce couldn't his nephew have stayed out in South Africa? His own divorce had been bad enough, without his nephew's marriage to the daughter of the co-respondent; a half-sister too of June,

and of that boy whom Fleur had just been looking at from under the pump-handle. If he didn't look out, she would come to know all about that old disgrace! Unpleasant things! They were round him this afternoon like a swarm of bees!

"I don't like it!" he said.

"I want to see the race-horses," murmured Fleur; "and they've promised I shall ride. Cousin Val can't walk much, you know; but he can ride perfectly. He's going to show me their gallops."

"Racing!" said Soames. "It's a pity the War didn't knock that on the head. He's taking after his father, I'm afraid."

"I don't know anything about his father."

"No," said Soames, grimly. "He took an interest in horses and broke his neck in Paris, walking down-stairs. Good riddance for your aunt." He frowned, recollecting the inquiry into those stairs which he had attended in Paris six years ago, because Montague Dartie could not attend it himself – perfectly normal stairs in a house where they played baccarat. Either his winnings or the way he had celebrated them had gone to his brother-in-law's head. The French procedure had been very loose; he had had a lot of trouble with it.

A sound from Fleur distracted his attention. "Look! The people who were in the Gallery with us."

"What people?" muttered Soames, who knew perfectly well.

"I think that woman's beautiful."

"Come into this pastry-cook's," said Soames abruptly, and tightening his grip on her arm he turned into a confectioner's. It was – for him – a surprising thing to do, and he said rather anxiously: "What will you have?"

"Oh! I don't want anything. I had a cocktail and a tremendous lunch."

"We must have something now we're here," muttered Soames, keeping hold of her arm.

"Two teas," he said; "and two of those nougat things."

But no sooner was his body seated than his soul sprang up. Those three – those three were coming in! He heard Irene say something to her boy, and his answer:

"Oh! no, Mum; this place is all right. My stunt." And the three sat down.

At that moment, most awkward of his existence, crowded with ghosts and shadows from his past, in presence of the only two women he had ever loved – his divorced wife and his daughter by her successor – Soames was not so much afraid of them as of his cousin June. She might make a scene – she might introduce those two children – she was capable of anything. He bit too hastily at the nougat, and it stuck to his plate. Working at it with his finger, he glanced at Fleur. She was masticating dreamily, but her eyes were on the boy. The Forsyte in him said: "Think, feel, and you're done for!" And he wiggled his finger desperately. Plate! Did Jolyon wear a plate? Did that woman wear a plate? Time had been when he had seen her wearing nothing! That was something, anyway, which had never been stolen from him. And she knew it, though she might sit there calm and self-possessed, as if she had never been his wife. An acid humour stirred in his Forsyte blood; a subtle pain divided by hair's breadth from pleasure. If only June did not suddenly bring her hornets about his ears! The boy was talking.

"Of course, Auntie June" – so he called his half-sister "Auntie," did he? – well, she must be fifty, if she was a day! – "it's jolly good of you to encourage them. Only – hang it all!" Soames stole a glance. Irene's startled eyes were bent watchfully on her boy. She – she had these devotions – for Bosinney – for that boy's father – for this boy! He touched Fleur's arm, and said:

"Well, have you had enough?"

"One more, Father, please."

She would be sick! He went to the counter to pay. When he turned round again he saw Fleur standing near the door, holding a handkerchief which the boy had evidently just handed to her.

"F. F.," he heard her say. "Fleur Forsyte – it's mine all right. Thank you ever so."

Good God! She had caught the trick from what he'd told her in the Gallery – monkey!

"Forsyte? Why – that's my name too. Perhaps we're cousins."

"Really! We must be. There aren't any others. I live at Mapledurham; where do you?"

"Robin Hill."

Question and answer had been so rapid that all was over before he could lift a finger. He saw Irene's face alive with startled feeling, gave the slightest shake of his head, and slipped his arm through Fleur's.

"Come along!" he said.

She did not move.

"Didn't you hear, Father? Isn't it queer – our name's the same. Are we cousins?"

"What's that?" he said. "Forsyte? Distant, perhaps."

"My name's Jolyon, sir. Jon, for short."

"Oh! Ah!" said Soames. "Yes. Distant. How are you? Very good of you. Good-bye!"

He moved on.

"Thanks awfully," Fleur was saying. "Au revoir!"

"Au revoir!" he heard the boy reply.

## II. – FINE FLEUR FORSYTE

Emerging from the "pastry-cook's," Soames' first impulse was to vent his nerves by saying to his daughter: 'Dropping your hand-kerchief!' to which her reply might well be: 'I picked that up from you!' His second impulse therefore was to let sleeping dogs lie. But she would surely question him. He gave her a sidelong look, and found she was giving him the same. She said softly:

"Why don't you like those cousins, Father?" Soames lifted the corner of his lip.

"What made you think that?"

"Cela se voit."

'That sees itself!' What a way of putting it! After twenty years of a French wife Soames had still little sympathy with her language; a theatrical affair and connected in his mind with all the refinements of domestic irony.

"How?" he asked.

"You must know them; and you didn't make a sign. I saw them looking at you."

"I've never seen the boy in my life," replied Soames with perfect truth.

"No; but you've seen the others, dear."

Soames gave her another look. What had she picked up? Had her Aunt Winifred, or Imogen, or Val Dartie and his wife, been talking? Every breath of the old scandal had been carefully kept from her at home, and Winifred warned many times that he wouldn't have a whisper of it reach her for the world. So far as she ought to know, he had never been married before. But her dark eyes, whose southern glint and clearness often almost frightened him, met his with perfect innocence.

"Well," he said, "your grandfather and his brother had a quarrel. The two families don't know each other."

"How romantic!"

'Now, what does she mean by that?' he thought. The word was to him extravagant and dangerous – it was as if she had said: "How jolly!"

"And they'll continue not to know each, other," he added, but instantly regretted the challenge in those words. Fleur was smiling. In this age, when young people prided themselves on going their own ways and paying no attention to any sort of decent prejudice, he had said the very thing to excite her wilfulness. Then, recollecting the expression on Irene's face, he breathed again.

"What sort of a quarrel?" he heard Fleur say.

"About a house. It's ancient history for you. Your grandfather died the day you were born. He was ninety."

"Ninety? Are there many Forsytes besides those in the Red Book?"

"I don't know," said Soames. "They're all dispersed now. The old ones are dead, except Timothy."

Fleur clasped her hands.

"Timothy? Isn't that delicious?"

"Not at all," said Soames. It offended him that she should think "Timothy" delicious – a kind of insult to his breed. This new generation mocked at anything solid and tenacious. "You go and see the old boy. He might want to prophesy." Ah! If Timothy could see the disquiet England of his great-nephews and great-nieces, he would certainly give tongue. And involuntarily he glanced up at the Iseeum; yes – George was still in the window, with the same pink paper in his hand.

"Where is Robin Hill, Father?"

Robin Hill! Robin Hill, round which all that tragedy had centred! What did she want to know for?

"In Surrey," he muttered; "not far from Richmond. Why?"

"Is the house there?"

"What house?"

"That they quarrelled about."

"Yes. But what's all that to do with you? We're going home to-morrow – you'd better be thinking about your frocks."

"Bless you! They're all thought about. A family feud? It's like the Bible, or Mark Twain – awfully exciting. What did you do in the feud, Father?"

"Never you mind."

"Oh! But if I'm to keep it up?"

"Who said you were to keep it up?"

"You, darling."

"I? I said it had nothing to do with you."

"Just what I think, you know; so that's all right."

She was too sharp for him; fine, as Annette sometimes called her. Nothing for it but to distract her attention.

"There's a bit of rosaline point in here," he said, stopping before a shop, "that I thought you might like."

When he had paid for it and they had resumed their progress, Fleur said:

"Don't you think that boy's mother is the most beautiful woman of her age you've ever seen?"

Soames shivered. Uncanny, the way she stuck to it!

"I don't know that I noticed her."

"Dear, I saw the corner of your eye."

"You see everything – and a great deal more, it seems to me!"

"What's her husband like? He must be your first cousin, if your fathers were brothers."

"Dead, for all I know," said Soames, with sudden vehemence. "I haven't seen him for twenty years."

"What was he?"

"A painter."

"That's quite jolly."

The words: "If you want to please me you'll put those people out of your head," sprang to Soames' lips, but he choked them back – he must not let her see his feelings.

"He once insulted me," he said.

Her quick eyes rested on his face.

"I see! You didn't avenge it, and it rankles. Poor Father! You let me have a go!"

It was really like lying in the dark with a mosquito hovering above his face. Such pertinacity in Fleur was new to him, and, as they reached the hotel, he said grimly:

"I did my best. And that's enough about these people. I'm going up till dinner."

"I shall sit here."

With a parting look at her extended in a chair – a look half-resentful, half-adoring – Soames moved into the lift and was transported to their suite on the fourth floor. He stood by the window of the sitting-room which gave view over Hyde Park, and drummed a finger on its pane. His feelings were confused, tetchy, troubled. The throb of that old wound, scarred over by Time and new interests, was mingled with displeasure and anxiety, and a slight pain in his chest where that nougat stuff had disagreed. Had Annette come in? Not that she was any good to him in such a difficulty. Whenever she had questioned him about his first marriage, he had always shut her up; she knew nothing of it, save that it had been the great passion of his life, and his marriage with herself but domestic makeshift. She had always kept the grudge of that up her sleeve, as it were, and used it commercially. He listened. A sound – the vague murmur of a woman's movements – was coming through the door. She was in. He tapped.

"Who?"

"I," said Soames.

She had been changing her frock, and was still imperfectly clothed; a striking figure before her glass. There was a certain magnificence about her arms, shoulders, hair, which had darkened since he first knew her, about the turn of her neck, the silkiness of her garments, her dark-lashed, greyblue eyes – she was certainly as handsome at forty as she had ever been. A fine possession, an excellent housekeeper, a sensible and affectionate enough mother. If only she weren't always so frankly cynical about the relations between them! Soames, who had no more real affection for her than she had for him, suffered from a kind of English grievance in that she had never dropped even the thinnest veil of sentiment over their partnership. Like most of his countrymen and women, he held the view that marriage should be based on mutual love, but that when from a marriage love had disappeared, or, been found never to have really existed – so that it was manifestly not based on love – you must not admit it. There it was, and the love was not – but there you were, and must continue to be! Thus you had it both ways, and were not tarred with cynicism, realism, and immorality like the French. Moreover, it was necessary in the interests of property. He knew that she knew that they both knew there was no love between them, but he still expected her not to admit in words or conduct such a thing, and he could never understand what she meant when she talked of the hypocrisy of the English. He said:

"Whom have you got at 'The Shelter' next week?"

Annette went on touching her lips delicately with salve – he always wished she wouldn't do that.

"Your sister Winifred, and the Car-r-digans" – she took up a tiny stick of black – "and Prosper Profond."

"That Belgian chap? Why him?"

Annette turned her neck lazily, touched one eyelash, and said:

"He amuses Winifred."

"I want some one to amuse Fleur; she's restive."

"R-restive?" repeated Annette. "Is it the first time you see that, my friend? She was born r-restive, as you call it."

Would she never get that affected roll out of her r's?

He touched the dress she had taken off, and asked:

"What have you been doing?"

Annette looked at him, reflected in her glass. Her just-brightened lips smiled, rather full, rather ironical.

"Enjoying myself," she said.

"Oh!" answered Soames glumly. "Ribbandry, I suppose."

It was his word for all that incomprehensible running in and out of shops that women went in for. "Has Fleur got her summer dresses?"

"You don't ask if I have mine."

"You don't care whether I do or not."

"Quite right. Well, she has; and I have mine – terribly expensive."

"H'm!" said Soames. "What does that chap Profond do in England?"

Annette raised the eyebrows she had just finished.

"He yachts."

"Ah!" said Soames; "he's a sleepy chap."

"Sometimes," answered Annette, and her face had a sort of quiet enjoyment. "But sometimes very amusing."

"He's got a touch of the tar-brush about him."

Annette stretched herself.

"Tar-brush?" she said. "What is that? His mother was Armenienne."

"That's it, then," muttered Soames. "Does he know anything about pictures?"

"He knows about everything – a man of the world."

"Well, get some one for Fleur. I want to distract her. She's going off on Saturday to Val Dartie and his wife; I don't like it."

"Why not?"

Since the reason could not be explained without going into family history, Soames merely answered:

"Racketing about. There's too much of it."

"I like that little Mrs. Val; she is very quiet and clever."

"I know nothing of her except – This thing's new." And Soames took up a creation from the bed.

Annette received it from him.

"Would you hook me?" she said.

Soames hooked. Glancing once over her shoulder into the glass, he saw the expression on her face, faintly amused, faintly contemptuous, as much as to say: "Thanks! You will never learn!" No, thank God, he wasn't a Frenchman! He finished with a jerk, and the words: "It's too low here." And he went to the door, with the wish to get away from her and go down to Fleur again.

Annette stayed a powder-puff, and said with startling suddenness

"Que tu es grossier!"

He knew the expression – he had reason to. The first time she had used it he had thought it meant "What a grocer you are!" and had not known whether to be relieved or not when better informed. He resented the word – he was not coarse! If he was coarse, what was that chap in the room beyond his, who made those horrible noises in the morning when he cleared his throat, or those people in the Lounge who thought it well-bred to say nothing but what the whole world could hear at the top of their voices – quacking inanity! Coarse, because he had said her dress was low! Well, so it was! He went out without reply.

Coming into the Lounge from the far end, he at once saw Fleur where he had left her. She sat with crossed knees, slowly balancing a foot in silk stocking and grey shoe, sure sign that she was dreaming. Her eyes showed it too – they went off like that sometimes. And then, in a moment, she would come to life, and be as quick and restless as a monkey. And she knew so much, so self-assured, and not yet nineteen. What was that odious word? Flapper! Dreadful young creatures – squealing and squawking and showing their legs! The worst of them bad dreams, the best of them powdered angels! Fleur was not a flapper, not one of those slangy, ill-bred young females. And yet she was frighteningly self-willed, and full of life, and determined to enjoy it. Enjoy! The word brought no puritan terror

to Soames; but it brought the terror suited to his temperament. He had always been afraid to enjoy to-day for fear he might not enjoy tomorrow so much. And it was terrifying to feel that his daughter was divested of that safeguard. The very way she sat in that chair showed it – lost in her dream. He had never been lost in a dream himself – there was nothing to be had out of it; and where she got it from he did not know! Certainly not from Annette! And yet Annette, as a young girl, when he was hanging about her, had once had a flowery look. Well, she had lost it now!

Fleur rose from her chair-swiftly, restlessly; and flung herself down at a writing-table. Seizing ink and writing paper, she began to write as if she had not time to breathe before she got her letter written. And suddenly she saw him. The air of desperate absorption vanished, she smiled, waved a kiss, made a pretty face as if she were a little puzzled and a little bored.

Ah! She was "fine" – "fine!"

## III. – AT ROBIN HILL

Jolyon Forsyte had spent his boy's nineteenth birthday at Robin Hill, quietly going into his affairs. He did everything quietly now, because his heart was in a poor way, and, like all his family, he disliked the idea of dying. He had never realised how much till one day, two years ago, he had gone to his doctor about certain symptoms, and been told:

"At any moment, on any overstrain."

He had taken it with a smile – the natural Forsyte reaction against an unpleasant truth. But with an increase of symptoms in the train on the way home, he had realised to the full the sentence hanging over him. To leave Irene, his boy, his home, his work – though he did little enough work now! To leave them for unknown darkness, for the unimaginable state, for such nothingness that he would not even be conscious of wind stirring leaves above his grave, nor of the scent of earth and grass. Of such nothingness that, however hard he might try to conceive it, he never could, and must still hover on the hope that he might see again those he loved! To realise this was to endure very poignant spiritual anguish. Before he reached home that day he had determined to keep it from Irene. He would have to be more careful than man had ever been, for the least thing would give it away and make her as wretched as himself, almost. His doctor had passed him sound in other respects, and seventy was nothing of an age – he would last a long time yet, if he could.

Such a conclusion, followed out for nearly two years, develops to the full the subtler side of character. Naturally not abrupt, except when nervously excited, Jolyon had become control incarnate. The sad patience of old people who cannot exert themselves was masked by a smile which his lips preserved even in private. He devised continually all manner of cover to conceal his enforced lack of exertion.

Mocking himself for so doing, he counterfeited conversion to the Simple Life; gave up wine and cigars, drank a special kind of coffee with no coffee in it. In short, he made himself as safe as a Forsyte in his condition could, under the rose of his mild irony. Secure from discovery, since his wife and son had gone up to Town, he had spent the fine May day quietly arranging his papers, that he might die to-morrow without inconveniencing any one, giving in fact a final polish to his terrestrial state. Having docketed and enclosed it in his father's old Chinese cabinet, he put the key into an envelope, wrote the words outside: "Key of the Chinese cabinet, wherein will be found the exact state of me, J. F.," and put it in his breast-pocket, where it would be always about him, in case of accident. Then, ringing for tea, he went out to have it under the old oak-tree.

All are under sentence of death; Jolyon, whose sentence was but a little more precise and pressing, had become so used to it that he thought habitually, like other people, of other things. He thought of his son now.

Jon was nineteen that day, and Jon had come of late to a decision. Educated neither at Eton like his father, nor at Harrow, like his dead half-brother, but at one of those establishments which,

designed to avoid the evil and contain the good of the Public School system, may or may not contain the evil and avoid the good, Jon had left in April perfectly ignorant of what he wanted to become. The War, which had promised to go on for ever, had ended just as he was about to join the Army, six months before his time. It had taken him ever since to get used to the idea that he could now choose for himself. He had held with his father several discussions, from which, under a cheery show of being ready for anything – except, of course, the Church, Army, Law, Stage, Stock Exchange, Medicine, Business, and Engineering – Jolyon had gathered rather clearly that Jon wanted to go in for nothing. He himself had felt exactly like that at the same age. With him that pleasant vacuity had soon been ended by an early marriage, and its unhappy consequences. Forced to become an underwriter at Lloyd's, he had regained prosperity before his artistic talent had outcropped. But having – as the simple say – "learned" his boy to draw pigs and other animals, he knew that Jon would never be a painter, and inclined to the conclusion that his aversion from everything else meant that he was going to be a writer. Holding, however, the view that experience was necessary even for that profession, there seemed to Jolyon nothing in the meantime, for Jon, but University, travel, and perhaps the eating of dinners for the Bar. After that one would see, or more probably one would not. In face of these proffered allurements, however, Jon had remained undecided.

Such discussions with his son had confirmed in Jolyon a doubt whether the world had really changed. People said that it was a new age. With the profundity of one not too long for any age, Jolyon perceived that under slightly different surfaces the era was precisely what it had been. Mankind was still divided into two species: The few who had "speculation" in their souls, and the many who had none, with a belt of hybrids like himself in the middle. Jon appeared to have speculation; it seemed to his father a bad lookout.

With something deeper, therefore, than his usual smile, he had heard the boy say, a fortnight ago: "I should like to try farming, Dad; if it won't cost you too much. It seems to be about the only sort of life that doesn't hurt anybody; except art, and of course that's out of the question for me."

Jolyon subdued his smile, and answered:

"All right; you shall skip back to where we were under the first Jolyon in 1760. It'll prove the cycle theory, and incidentally, no doubt, you may grow a better turnip than he did."

A little dashed, Jon had answered:

"But don't you think it's a good scheme, Dad?"

"'Twill serve, my dear; and if you should really take to it, you'll do more good than most men, which is little enough."

To himself, however, he had said: 'But he won't take to it. I give him four years. Still, it's healthy, and harmless.'

After turning the matter over and consulting with Irene, he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. Val Dartie, asking if they knew of a farmer near them on the Downs who would take Jon as an apprentice. Holly's answer had been enthusiastic. There was an excellent man quite close; she and Val would love Jon to live with them.

The boy was due to go to-morrow.

Sipping weak tea with lemon in it, Jolyon gazed through the leaves of the old oak-tree at that view which had appeared to him desirable for thirty-two years. The tree beneath which he sat seemed not a day older! So young, the little leaves of brownish gold; so old, the whitey-grey-green of its thick rough trunk. A tree of memories, which would live on hundreds of years yet, unless some barbarian cut it down – would see old England out at the pace things were going! He remembered a night three years before, when, looking from his window, with his arm close round Irene, he had watched a German aeroplane hovering, it seemed, right over the old tree. Next day they had found a bomb hole in a field on Gage's farm. That was before he knew that he was under sentence of death. He could almost have wished the bomb had finished him. It would have saved a lot of hanging about, many hours of cold fear in the pit of his stomach. He had counted on living to the normal Forsyte age of

eighty-five or more, when Irene would be seventy. As it was, she would miss him. Still there was Jon, more important in her life than himself; Jon, who adored his mother.

Under that tree, where old Jolyon – waiting for Irene to come to him across the lawn – had breathed his last, Jolyon wondered, whimsically, whether, having put everything in such perfect order, he had not better close his own eyes and drift away. There was something undignified in parasitically clinging on to the effortless close of a life wherein he regretted two things only – the long division between his father and himself when he was young, and the lateness of his union with Irene.

From where he sat he could see a cluster of apple-trees in blossom. Nothing in Nature moved him so much as fruit-trees in blossom; and his heart ached suddenly because he might never see them flower again. Spring! Decidedly no man ought to have to die while his heart was still young enough to love beauty! Blackbirds sang recklessly in the shrubbery, swallows were flying high, the leaves above him glistened; and over the fields was every imaginable tint of early foliage, burnished by the level sunlight, away to where the distant "smoke-bush" blue was trailed along the horizon. Irene's flowers in their narrow beds had startling individuality that evening, little deep assertions of gay life. Only Chinese and Japanese painters, and perhaps Leonardo, had known how to get that startling little ego into each painted flower, and bird, and beast – the ego, yet the sense of species, the universality of life as well. They were the fellows! 'I've made nothing that will live!' thought Jolyon; 'I've been an amateur – a mere lover, not a creator. Still, I shall leave Jon behind me when I go.' What luck that the boy had not been caught by that ghastly war! He might so easily have been killed, like poor Jolly twenty years ago out in the Transvaal. Jon would do something some day – if the Age didn't spoil him – an imaginative chap! His whim to take up farming was but a bit of sentiment, and about as likely to last. And just then he saw them coming up the field: Irene and the boy; walking from the station, with their arms linked. And getting up, he strolled down through the new rose garden to meet them…

Irene came into his room that night and sat down by the window. She sat there without speaking till he said:

"What is it, my love?"

"We had an encounter to-day."

"With whom?"

"Soames."

Soames! He had kept that name out of his thoughts these last two years; conscious that it was bad for him. And, now, his heart moved in a disconcerting manner, as if it had side-slipped within his chest.

Irene went on quietly:

"He and his daughter were in the Gallery, and afterward at the confectioner's where we had tea."

Jolyon went over and put his hand on her shoulder.

"How did he look?"

"Grey; but otherwise much the same."

"And the daughter?"

"Pretty. At least, Jon thought so."

Jolyon's heart side-slipped again. His wife's face had a strained and puzzled look.

"You didn't-?" he began.

"No; but Jon knows their name. The girl dropped her handkerchief and he picked it up."

Jolyon sat down on his bed. An evil chance!

"June was with you. Did she put her foot into it?"

"No; but it was all very queer and strained, and Jon could see it was."

Jolyon drew a long breath, and said:

"I've often wondered whether we've been right to keep it from him. He'll find out some day."

"The later the better, Jolyon; the young have such cheap, hard judgment. When you were nineteen what would you have thought of your mother if she had done what I have?"

Yes! There it was! Jon worshipped his mother; and knew nothing of the tragedies, the inexorable necessities of life, nothing of the prisoned grief in an unhappy marriage, nothing of jealousy or passion – knew nothing at all, as yet!

"What have you told him?" he said at last.

"That they were relations, but we didn't know them; that you had never cared much for your family, or they for you. I expect he will be asking you."

Jolyon smiled. "This promises to take the place of air-raids," he said. "After all, one misses them."

Irene looked up at him.

"We've known it would come some day."

He answered her with sudden energy:

"I could never stand seeing Jon blame you. He shan't do that, even in thought. He has imagination; and he'll understand if it's put to him properly. I think I had better tell him before he gets to know otherwise."

"Not yet, Jolyon."

That was like her – she had no foresight, and never went to meet trouble. Still – who knew? – she might be right. It was ill going against a mother's instinct. It might be well to let the boy go on, if possible, till experience had given him some touchstone by which he could judge the values of that old tragedy; till love, jealousy, longing, had deepened his charity. All the same, one must take precautions – every precaution possible! And, long after Irene had left him, he lay awake turning over those precautions. He must write to Holly, telling her that Jon knew nothing as yet of family history. Holly was discreet, she would make sure of her husband, she would see to it! Jon could take the letter with him when he went to-morrow.

And so the day on which he had put the polish on his material estate died out with the chiming of the stable clock; and another began for Jolyon in the shadow of a spiritual disorder which could not be so rounded off and polished…

But Jon, whose room had once been his day nursery, lay awake too, the prey of a sensation disputed by those who have never known it, "love at first sight!" He had felt it beginning in him with the glint of those dark eyes gazing into his athwart the Juno – a conviction that this was his 'dream'. so that what followed had seemed to him at once natural and miraculous. Fleur! Her name alone was almost enough for one who was terribly susceptible to the charm of words. In a homoeopathic Age, when boys and girls were co-educated, and mixed up in early life till sex was almost abolished, Jon was singularly old-fashioned. His modern school took boys only, and his holidays had been spent at Robin Hill with boy friends, or his parents alone. He had never, therefore, been inoculated against the germs of love by small doses of the poison. And now in the dark his temperature was mounting fast. He lay awake, featuring Fleur – as they called it – recalling her words, especially that "Au revoir!" so soft and sprightly.

He was still so wide awake at dawn that he got up, slipped on tennis shoes, trousers, and a sweater, and in silence crept downstairs and out through the study window. It was just light; there was a smell of grass. 'Fleur!' he thought; 'Fleur!' It was mysteriously white out of doors, with nothing awake except the birds just beginning to chirp. 'I'll go down into the coppice,' he thought. He ran down through the fields, reached the pond just as the sun rose, and passed into the coppice. Bluebells carpeted the ground there; among the larch-trees there was mystery – the air, as it were, composed of that romantic quality. Jon sniffed its freshness, and stared at the bluebells in the sharpening light. Fleur! It rhymed with her! And she lived at Mapleduram – a jolly name, too, on the river somewhere. He could find it in the atlas presently. He would write to her. But would she answer? Oh! She must. She had said "Au revoir!" Not good-bye! What luck that she had dropped her handkerchief! He would never have known her but for that. And the more he thought of that handkerchief, the more amazing

his luck seemed. Fleur! It certainly rhymed with her! Rhythm thronged his head; words jostled to be joined together; he was on the verge of a poem.

Jon remained in this condition for more than half an hour, then returned to the house, and getting a ladder, climbed in at his bedroom window out of sheer exhilaration. Then, remembering that the study window was open, he went down and shut it, first removing the ladder, so as to obliterate all traces of his feeling. The thing was too deep to be revealed to mortal soul-even-to his mother.

## IV. – THE MAUSOLEUM

There are houses whose souls have passed into the limbo of Time, leaving their bodies in the limbo of London. Such was not quite the condition of "Timothy's" on the Bayswater Road, for Timothy's soul still had one foot in Timothy Forsyte's body, and Smither kept the atmosphere unchanging, of camphor and port wine and house whose windows are only opened to air it twice a day.

To Forsyte imagination that house was now a sort of Chinese pill-box, a series of layers in the last of which was Timothy. One did not reach him, or so it was reported by members of the family who, out of old-time habit or absentmindedness, would drive up once in a blue moon and ask after their surviving uncle. Such were Francie, now quite emancipated from God (she frankly avowed atheism), Euphemia, emancipated from old Nicholas, and Winifred Dartie from her "man of the world." But, after all, everybody was emancipated now, or said they were – perhaps not quite the same thing!

When Soames, therefore, took it on his way to Paddington station on the morning after that encounter, it was hardly with the expectation of seeing Timothy in the flesh. His heart made a faint demonstration within him while he stood in full south sunlight on the newly whitened doorstep of that little house where four Forsytes had once lived, and now but one dwelt on like a winter fly; the house into which Soames had come and out of which he had gone times without number, divested of, or burdened with, fardels of family gossip; the house of the "old people" of another century, another age.

The sight of Smither – still corseted up to the armpits because the new fashion which came in as they were going out about 1903 had never been considered "nice" by Aunts Juley and Hester – brought a pale friendliness to Soames' lips; Smither, still faithfully arranged to old pattern in every detail, an invaluable servant – none such left – smiling back at him, with the words: "Why! it's Mr. Soames, after all this time! And how are you, sir? Mr. Timothy will be so pleased to know you've been."

"How is he?"

"Oh! he keeps fairly bobbish for his age, sir; but of course he's a wonderful man. As I said to Mrs. Dartie when she was here last: It would please Miss Forsyte and Mrs. Juley and Miss Hester to see how he relishes a baked apple still. But he's quite deaf. And a mercy, I always think. For what we should have done with him in the air-raids, I don't know."

"Ah!" said Soames. "What did you do with him?"

"We just left him in his bed, and had the bell run down into the cellar, so that Cook and I could hear him if he rang. It would never have done to let him know there was a war on. As I said to Cook, 'If Mr. Timothy rings, they may do what they like – I'm going up. My dear mistresses would have a fit if they could see him ringing and nobody going to him.' But he slept through them all beautiful. And the one in the daytime he was having his bath. It was a mercy, because he might have noticed the people in the street all looking up – he often looks out of the window."

"Quite!" murmured Soames. Smither was getting garrulous! "I just want to look round and see if there's anything to be done."

"Yes, sir. I don't think there's anything except a smell of mice in the dining-room that we don't know how to get rid of. It's funny they should be there, and not a crumb, since Mr. Timothy took to not coming down, just before the War. But they're nasty little things; you never know where they'll take you next."

"Does he leave his bed?" —

"Oh! yes, sir; he takes nice exercise between his bed and the window in the morning, not to risk a change of air. And he's quite comfortable in himself; has his Will out every day regular. It's a great consolation to him – that."

"Well, Smither, I want to see him, if I can; in case he has anything to say to me."

Smither coloured up above her corsets.

"It will be an occasion!" she said. "Shall I take you round the house, sir, while I send Cook to break it to him?"

"No, you go to him," said Soames. "I can go round the house by myself."

One could not confess to sentiment before another, and Soames felt that he was going to be sentimental nosing round those rooms so saturated with the past. When Smither, creaking with excitement, had left him, Soames entered the dining-room and sniffed. In his opinion it wasn't mice, but incipient wood-rot, and he examined the panelling. Whether it was worth a coat of paint, at Timothy's age, he was not sure. The room had always been the most modern in the house; and only a faint smile curled Soames' lips and nostrils. Walls of a rich green surmounted the oak dado; a heavy metal chandelier hung by a chain from a ceiling divided by imitation beams. The pictures had been bought by Timothy, a bargain, one day at Jobson's sixty years ago – three Snyder "still lifes," two faintly coloured drawings of a boy and a girl, rather charming, which bore the initials "J. R." – Timothy had always believed they might turn out to be Joshua Reynolds, but Soames, who admired them, had discovered that they were only John Robinson; and a doubtful Morland of a white pony being shod. Deep-red plush curtains, ten high-backed dark mahogany chairs with deep-red plush seats, a Turkey carpet, and a mahogany dining-table as large as the room was small, such was an apartment which Soames could remember unchanged in soul or body since he was four years old. He looked especially at the two drawings, and thought: 'I shall buy those at the sale.'

From the dining-room he passed into Timothy's study. He did not remember ever having been in that room. It was lined from floor to ceiling with volumes, and he looked at them with curiosity. One wall seemed devoted to educational books, which Timothy's firm had published two generations back-sometimes as many as twenty copies of one book. Soames read their titles and shuddered. The middle wall had precisely the same books as used to be in the library at his own father's in Park Lane, from which he deduced the fancy that James and his youngest brother had gone out together one day and bought a brace of small libraries. The third wall he approached with more excitement. Here, surely, Timothy's own taste would be found. It was. The books were dummies. The fourth wall was all heavily curtained window. And turned toward it was a large chair with a mahogany reading-stand attached, on which a yellowish and folded copy of The Times, dated July 6, 1914, the day Timothy first failed to come down, as if in preparation for the War, seemed waiting for him still. In a corner stood a large globe of that world never visited by Timothy, deeply convinced of the unreality of everything but England, and permanently upset by the sea, on which he had been very sick one Sunday afternoon in 1836, out of a pleasure boat off the pier at Brighton, with Juley and Hester, Swithin and Hatty Chessman; all due to Swithin, who was always taking things into his head, and who, thank goodness, had been sick too. Soames knew all about it, having heard the tale fifty times at least from one or other of them. He went up to the globe, and gave it a spin; it emitted a faint creak and moved about an inch, bringing into his purview a daddy-long-legs which had died on it in latitude 44.

'Mausoleum!' he thought. 'George was right!' And he went out and up the stairs. On the half-landing he stopped before the case of stuffed humming-birds which had delighted his childhood. They looked not a day older, suspended on wires above pampas-grass. If the case were opened the birds would not begin to hum, but the whole thing would crumble, he suspected. It wouldn't be worth putting that into the sale! And suddenly he was caught by a memory of Aunt Ann – dear old Aunt Ann – holding him by the hand in front of that case and saying: "Look, Soamey! Aren't they bright and pretty, dear little humming-birds!" Soames remembered his own answer: "They don't hum, Auntie."

He must have been six, in a black velveteen suit with a light-blue collar-he remembered that suit well! Aunt Ann with her ringlets, and her spidery kind hands, and her grave old aquiline smile – a fine old lady, Aunt Ann! He moved on up to the drawing-room door. There on each side of it were the groups of miniatures. Those he would certainly buy in! The miniatures of his four aunts, one of his Uncle Swithin adolescent, and one of his Uncle Nicholas as a boy. They had all been painted by a young lady friend of the family at a time, 1830, about, when miniatures were considered very genteel, and lasting too, painted as they were on ivory. Many a time had he heard the tale of that young lady: "Very talented, my dear; she had quite a weakness for Swithin, and very soon after she went into a consumption and died: so like Keats – we often spoke of it."

Well, there they were! Ann, Juley, Hester, Susan – quite a small child; Swithin, with sky-blue eyes, pink cheeks, yellow curls, white waistcoat-large as life; and Nicholas, like Cupid with an eye on heaven. Now he came to think of it, Uncle Nick had always been rather like that – a wonderful man to the last. Yes, she must have had talent, and miniatures always had a certain back-watered cachet of their own, little subject to the currents of competition on aesthetic Change. Soames opened the drawing-room door. The room was dusted, the furniture uncovered, the curtains drawn back, precisely as if his aunts still dwelt there patiently waiting. And a thought came to him: When Timothy died – why not? Would it not be almost a duty to preserve this house – like Carlyle's – and put up a tablet, and show it? "Specimen of mid-Victorian abode – entrance, one shilling, with catalogue." After all, it was the completest thing, and perhaps the deadest in the London of to-day. Perfect in its special taste and culture, if, that is, he took down and carried over to his own collection the four Barbizon pictures he had given them. The still sky-blue walls, tile green curtains patterned with red flowers and ferns; the crewel-worked fire-screen before the cast-iron grate; the mahogany cupboard with glass windows, full of little knickknacks; the beaded footstools; Keats, Shelley, Southey, Cowper, Coleridge, Byron's Corsair (but nothing else), and the Victorian poets in a bookshelf row; the marqueterie cabinet lined with dim red plush, full of family relics: Hester's first fan; the buckles of their mother's father's shoes; three bottled scorpions; and one very yellow elephant's tusk, sent home from India by Great-uncle Edgar Forsyte, who had been in jute; a yellow bit of paper propped up, with spidery writing on it, recording God knew what! And the pictures crowding on the walls – all water-colours save those four Barbizons looking like the foreigners they were, and doubtful customers at that – pictures bright and illustrative, "Telling the Bees," "Hey for the Ferry!" and two in the style of Frith, all thimblerig and crinolines, given them by Swithin. Oh! many, many pictures at which Soames had gazed a thousand times in supercilious fascination; a marvellous collection of bright, smooth gilt frames.

And the boudoir-grand piano, beautifully dusted, hermetically sealed as ever; and Aunt Juley's album of pressed seaweed on it. And the gilt-legged chairs, stronger than they looked. And on one side of the fireplace the sofa of crimson silk, where Aunt Ann, and after her Aunt Juley, had been wont to sit, facing the light and bolt upright. And on the other side of the fire the one really easy chair, back to the light, for Aunt Hester. Soames screwed up his eyes; he seemed to see them sitting there. Ah! and the atmosphere – even now, of too many stuffs and washed lace curtains, lavender in bags, and dried bees' wings. 'No,' he thought, 'there's nothing like it left; it ought to be preserved.' And, by George, they might laugh at it, but for a standard of gentle life never departed from, for fastidiousness of skin and eye and nose and feeling, it beat to-day hollow – to-day with its Tubes and cars, its perpetual smoking, its cross-legged, bare-necked girls visible up to the knees and down to the waist if you took the trouble (agreeable to the satyr within each Forsyte but hardly his idea of a lady), with their feet, too, screwed round the legs of their chairs while they ate, and their "So longs," and their "Old Beans," and their laughter – girls who gave him the shudders whenever he thought of Fleur in contact with them; and the hard-eyed, capable, older women who managed life and gave him the shudders too. No! his old aunts, if they never opened their minds, their eyes, or very much their windows, at least had manners, and a standard, and reverence for past and future.

With rather a choky feeling he closed the door and went tiptoeing upstairs. He looked in at a place on the way: H'm! in perfect order of the eighties, with a sort of yellow oilskin paper on the walls. At the top of the stairs he hesitated between four doors. Which of them was Timothy's? And he listened. A sound, as of a child slowly dragging a hobby-horse about, came to his ears. That must be Timothy! He tapped, and a door was opened by Smither, very red in the face.

Mr. Timothy was taking his walk, and she had not been able to get him to attend. If Mr. Soames would come into the back-room, he could see him through the door.

Soames went into the back-room and stood watching.

The last of the old Forsytes was on his feet, moving with the most impressive slowness, and an air of perfect concentration on his own affairs, backward and forward between the foot of his bed and the window, a distance of some twelve feet. The lower part of his square face, no longer clean-shaven, was covered with snowy beard clipped as short as it could be, and his chin looked as broad as his brow where the hair was also quite white, while nose and cheeks and brow were a good yellow. One hand held a stout stick, and the other grasped the skirt of his Jaeger dressing-gown, from under which could be seen his bed-socked ankles and feet thrust into Jaeger slippers. The expression on his face was that of a crossed child, intent on something that he has not got. Each time he turned he stumped the stick, and then dragged it, as if to show that he could do without it:

"He still looks strong," said Soames under his breath.

"Oh! yes, sir. You should see him take his bath – it's wonderful; he does enjoy it so."

Those quite loud words gave Soames an insight. Timothy had resumed his babyhood.

"Does he take any interest in things generally?" he said, also loud.

"Oh! yes, sir; his food and his Will. It's quite a sight to see him turn it over and over, not to read it, of course; and every now and then he asks the price of Consols, and I write it on a slate for him – very large. Of course, I always write the same, what they were when he last took notice, in 1914. We got the doctor to forbid him to read the paper when the War broke out. Oh! he did take on about that at first. But he soon came round, because he knew it tired him; and he's a wonder to conserve energy as he used to call it when my dear mistresses were alive, bless their hearts! How he did go on at them about that; they were always so active, if you remember, Mr. Soames."

"What would happen if I were to go in?" asked Soames: "Would he remember me? I made his Will, you know, after Miss Hester died in 1907."

"Oh! that, sir," replied Smither doubtfully, "I couldn't take on me to say. I think he might; he really is a wonderful man for his age."

Soames moved into the doorway, and waiting for Timothy to turn, said in a loud voice: "Uncle Timothy!"

Timothy trailed back half-way, and halted.

"Eh?" he said.

"Soames," cried Soames at the top of his voice, holding out his hand, "Soames Forsyte!"

"No!" said Timothy, and stumping his stick loudly on the floor, he continued his walk.

"It doesn't seem to work," said Soames.

"No, sir," replied Smither, rather crestfallen; "you see, he hasn't finished his walk. It always was one thing at a time with him. I expect he'll ask me this afternoon if you came about the gas, and a pretty job I shall have to make him understand."

"Do you think he ought to have a man about him?"

Smither held up her hands. "A man! Oh! no. Cook and me can manage perfectly. A strange man about would send him crazy in no time. And my mistresses wouldn't like the idea of a man in the house. Besides, we're so – proud of him."

"I suppose the doctor comes?"

"Every morning. He makes special terms for such a quantity, and Mr. Timothy's so used, he doesn't take a bit of notice, except to put out his tongue."

"Well," said Soames, turning away, "it's rather sad and painful to me."

"Oh! sir," returned Smither anxiously, "you mustn't think that. Now that he can't worry about things, he quite enjoys his life, really he does. As I say to Cook, Mr. Timothy is more of a man than he ever was. You see, when he's not walkin', or takin' his bath, he's eatin', and when he's not eatin', he's sleepin'. and there it is. There isn't an ache or a care about him anywhere."

"Well," said Soames, "there's something in that. I'll go down. By the way, let me see his Will."

"I should have to take my time about that, sir; he keeps it under his pillow, and he'd see me, while he's active."

"I only want to know if it's the one I made," said Soames; "you take a look at its date some time, and let me know."

"Yes, sir; but I'm sure it's the same, because me and Cook witnessed, you remember, and there's our names on it still, and we've only done it once."

"Quite," said Soames. He did remember. Smither and Jane had been proper witnesses, having been left nothing in the Will that they might have no interest in Timothy's death. It had been – he fully admitted – an almost improper precaution, but Timothy had wished it, and, after all, Aunt Hester had provided for them amply.

"Very well," he said; "good-bye, Smither. Look after him, and if he should say anything at any time, put it down, and let me know."

"Oh! yes, Mr. Soames; I'll be sure to do that. It's been such a pleasant change to see you. Cook will be quite excited when I tell her."

Soames shook her hand and went down-stairs. He stood for fully two minutes by the hat-stand whereon he had hung his hat so many times. 'So it all passes,' he was thinking; 'passes and begins again. Poor old chap!' And he listened, if perchance the sound of Timothy trailing his hobby-horse might come down the well of the stairs; or some ghost of an old face show over the bannisters, and an old voice say: 'Why, it's dear Soames, and we were only saying that we hadn't seen him for a week!'

Nothing – nothing! Just the scent of camphor, and dust-motes in a sunbeam through the fanlight over the door. The little old house! A mausoleum! And, turning on his heel, he went out, and caught his train.

## V. – THE NATIVE HEATH

"His foot's upon his native heath,
His name's – Val Dartie."

With some such feeling did Val Dartie, in the fortieth year of his age, set out that same Thursday morning very early from the old manor-house he had taken on the north side of the Sussex Downs. His destination was Newmarket, and he had not been there since the autumn of 1899, when he stole over from Oxford for the Cambridgeshire. He paused at the door to give his wife a kiss, and put a flask of port into his pocket.

"Don't overtire your leg, Val, and don't bet too much."

With the pressure of her chest against his own, and her eyes looking into his, Val felt both leg and pocket safe. He should be moderate; Holly was always right – she had a natural aptitude. It did not seem so remarkable to him, perhaps, as it might to others, that – half Dartie as he was – he should have been perfectly faithful to his young first cousin during the twenty years since he married her romantically out in the Boer War; and faithful without any feeling of sacrifice or boredom – she was so quick, so slyly always a little in front of his mood. Being first cousins they had decided, rather needlessly, to have no children; and, though a little sallower, she had kept her looks, her slimness, and the colour of her dark hair. Val particularly admired the life of her own she carried on, besides

carrying on his, and riding better every year. She kept up her music, she read an awful lot – novels, poetry, all sorts of stuff. Out on their farm in Cape colony she had looked after all the "nigger" babies and women in a miraculous manner. She was, in fact, clever; yet made no fuss about it, and had no "side." Though not remarkable for humility, Val had come to have the feeling that she was his superior, and he did not grudge it – a great tribute. It might be noted that he never looked at Holly without her knowing of it, but that she looked at him sometimes unawares.

He had kissed her in the porch because he should not be doing so on the platform, though she was going to the station with him, to drive the car back. Tanned and wrinkled by Colonial weather and the wiles inseparable from horses, and handicapped by the leg which, weakened in the Boer War, had probably saved his life in the War just past, Val was still much as he had been in the days of his courtship; his smile as wide and charming, his eyelashes, if anything, thicker and darker, his eyes screwed up under them, as bright a grey, his freckles rather deeper, his hair a little grizzled at the sides. He gave the impression of one who has lived actively with horses in a sunny climate.

Twisting the car sharp round at the gate, he said:

"When is young Jon coming?"

"To-day."

"Is there anything you want for him? I could bring it down on Saturday."

"No; but you might come by the same train as Fleur – one-forty."

Val gave the Ford full rein; he still drove like a man in a new country on bad roads, who refuses to compromise, and expects heaven at every hole.

"That's a young woman who knows her way about," he said. "I say, has it struck you?"

"Yes," said Holly.

"Uncle Soames and your Dad – bit awkward, isn't it?"

"She won't know, and he won't know, and nothing must be said, of course. It's only for five days, Val."

"Stable secret! Righto!" If Holly thought it safe, it was. Glancing slyly round at him, she said: "Did you notice how beautifully she asked herself?"

"No!"

"Well, she did. What do you think of her, Val?"

"Pretty and clever; but she might run out at any corner if she got her monkey up, I should say."

"I'm wondering," Holly murmured, "whether she is the modern young woman. One feels at sea coming home into all this."

"You? You get the hang of things so quick."

Holly slid her hand into his coat-pocket.

"You keep one in the know," said Val encouraged. "What do you think of that Belgian fellow, Profond?"

"I think he's rather 'a good devil.'"

Val grinned.

"He seems to me a queer fish for a friend of our family. In fact, our family is in pretty queer waters, with Uncle Soames marrying a Frenchwoman, and your Dad marrying Soames's first. Our grandfathers would have had fits!"

"So would anybody's, my dear."

"This car," Val said suddenly, "wants rousing; she doesn't get her hind legs under her uphill. I shall have to give her her head on the slope if I'm to catch that train."

There was that about horses which had prevented him from ever really sympathising with a car, and the running of the Ford under his guidance compared with its running under that of Holly was always noticeable. He caught the train.

"Take care going home; she'll throw you down if she can. Good-bye, darling."

"Good-bye," called Holly, and kissed her hand.

In the train, after quarter of an hour's indecision between thoughts of Holly, his morning paper, the look of the bright day, and his dim memory of Newmarket, Val plunged into the recesses of a small square book, all names, pedigrees, tap-roots, and notes about the make and shape of horses. The Forsyte in him was bent on the acquisition of a certain strain of blood, and he was subduing resolutely as yet the Dartie hankering for a Nutter. On getting back to England, after the profitable sale of his South African farm and stud, and observing that the sun seldom shone, Val had said to himself: "I've absolutely got to have an interest in life, or this country will give me the blues. Hunting's not enough, I'll breed and I'll train." With just that extra pinch of shrewdness and decision imparted by long residence in a new country, Val had seen the weak point of modern breeding. They were all hypnotised by fashion and high price. He should buy for looks, and let names go hang! And here he was already, hypnotised by the prestige of a certain strain of blood! Half-consciously, he thought: 'There's something in this damned climate which makes one go round in a ring. All the same, I must have a strain of Mayfly blood.'

In this mood he reached the Mecca of his hopes. It was one of those quiet meetings favourable to such as wish to look into horses, rather than into the mouths of bookmakers; and Val clung to the paddock. His twenty years of Colonial life, divesting him of the dandyism in which he had been bred, had left him the essential neatness of the horseman, and given him a queer and rather blighting eye over what he called "the silly haw-haw" of some Englishmen, the "flapping cockatoory" of some English-women – Holly had none of that and Holly was his model. Observant, quick, resourceful, Val went straight to the heart of a transaction, a horse, a drink; and he was on his way to the heart of a Mayfly filly, when a slow voice said at his elbow:

"Mr. Val Dartie? How's Mrs. Val Dartie? She's well, I hope." And he saw beside him the Belgian he had met at his sister Imogen's.

"Prosper Profond – I met you at lunch," said the voice.

"How are you?" murmured Val.

"I'm very well," replied Monsieur Profond, smiling with a certain inimitable slowness. "A good devil," Holly had called him. Well! He looked a little like a devil, with his dark, clipped, pointed beard; a sleepy one though, and good-humoured, with fine eyes, unexpectedly intelligent.

"Here's a gentleman wants to know you – cousin of yours – Mr. George Forsyde."

Val saw a large form, and a face clean-shaven, bull-like, a little lowering, with sardonic humour bubbling behind a full grey eye; he remembered it dimly from old days when he would dine with his father at the Iseeum Club.

"I used to go racing with your father," George was saying: "How's the stud? Like to buy one of my screws?"

Val grinned, to hide the sudden feeling that the bottom had fallen out of breeding. They believed in nothing over here, not even in horses. George Forsyte, Prosper Profond! The devil himself was not more disillusioned than those two.

"Didn't know you were a racing man," he said to Monsieur Profond.

"I'm not. I don't care for it. I'm a yachtin' man. I don't care for yachtin' either, but I like to see my friends. I've got some lunch, Mr. Val Dartie, just a small lunch, if you'd like to 'ave some; not much – just a small one – in my car."

"Thanks," said Val; "very good of you. I'll come along in about quarter of an hour."

"Over there. Mr. Forsyde's comin'," and Monsieur Profond "poinded" with a yellow-gloved finger; "small car, with a small lunch"; he moved on, groomed, sleepy, and remote, George Forsyte following, neat, huge, and with his jesting air.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.