

GALSWORTHY JOHN

THE FORSYTE SAGA,
VOLUME I. THE MAN OF
PROPERTY

John Galsworthy

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I. The Man Of Property**

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John Galsworthy

The Forsyte Saga, Volume I. / The Man Of Property

TO MY WIFE:

*I DEDICATE THE FORSYTE SAGA IN ITS ENTIRETY, BELIEVING IT
TO BE OF ALL MY WORKS THE LEAST UNWORTHY OF ONE WITHOUT
WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT, SYMPATHY AND CRITICISM I COULD NEVER
HAVE BECOME EVEN SUCH A WRITER AS I AM.*

PREFACE:

“The Forsyte Saga” was the title originally destined for that part of it which is called “The Man of Property”; and to adopt it for the collected chronicles of the Forsyte family has indulged the Forsytean tenacity that is in all of us. The word Saga might be objected to on the ground that it connotes the heroic and that there is little heroism in these pages. But it is used with a suitable irony; and, after all, this long tale, though it may deal with folk in frock coats, furbelows, and a gilt-edged period, is not devoid of the essential heat of conflict. Discounting for the gigantic stature and blood-thirstiness of old days, as they have come down to us in fairy-tale and legend, the folk of the old Sagas were Forsytes, assuredly, in their possessive instincts, and as little proof against the inroads of beauty and passion as Swithin, Soames, or even Young Jolyon. And if heroic figures, in days that never were, seem to startle out from their surroundings in fashion unbecoming to a Forsyte of the Victorian era, we may be sure that tribal instinct was even then the prime force, and that “family” and the sense of home and property counted as they do to this day, for all the recent efforts to “talk them out.”

So many people have written and claimed that their families were the originals of the Forsytes that one has been almost encouraged to believe in the typicality of an imagined species. Manners change and modes evolve, and “Timothy’s on the Bayswater Road” becomes a nest of the unbelievable in all except essentials; we shall not look upon its like again, nor perhaps on such a one as James or Old Jolyon. And yet the figures of Insurance Societies and the utterances of Judges reassure us daily that our earthly paradise is still a rich preserve, where the wild raiders, Beauty and Passion, come stealing in, filching security from beneath our noses. As surely as a dog will bark at a brass band, so will the essential Soames in human nature ever rise up uneasily against the dissolution which hovers round the folds of ownership.

“Let the dead Past bury its dead” would be a better saying if the Past ever died. The persistence of the Past is one of those tragi-comic blessings which each new age denies, coming cocksure on to the stage to mouth its claim to a perfect novelty.

But no Age is so new as that! Human Nature, under its changing pretensions and clothes, is and ever will be very much of a Forsyte, and might, after all, be a much worse animal.

Looking back on the Victorian era, whose ripeness, decline, and ‘fall-of’ is in some sort pictured in “The Forsyte Saga,” we see now that we have but jumped out of a frying-pan into a fire. It would be difficult to substantiate a claim that the case of England was better in 1913 than it was in 1886, when the Forsytes assembled at Old Jolyon’s to celebrate the engagement of June to Philip Bosinney. And in 1920, when again the clan gathered to bless the marriage of Fleur with Michael Mont, the state of England is as surely too molten and bankrupt as in the eighties it was too congealed and low-percented. If these chronicles had been a really scientific study of transition one would have dwelt probably on such factors as the invention of bicycle, motor-car, and flying-machine; the arrival of a cheap Press; the decline of country life and increase of the towns; the birth of the Cinema. Men are, in fact, quite unable to control their own inventions; they at best develop adaptability to the new conditions those inventions create.

But this long tale is no scientific study of a period; it is rather an intimate incarnation of the disturbance that Beauty effects in the lives of men.

The figure of Irene, never, as the reader may possibly have observed, present, except through the senses of other characters, is a concretion of disturbing Beauty impinging on a possessive world.

One has noticed that readers, as they wade on through the salt waters of the Saga, are inclined more and more to pity Soames, and to think that in doing so they are in revolt against the mood of his creator. Far from it! He, too, pities Soames, the tragedy of whose life is the very simple, uncontrollable tragedy of being unlovable, without quite a thick enough skin to be thoroughly unconscious of the fact. Not even Fleur loves Soames as he feels he ought to be loved. But in pitying Soames, readers

incline, perhaps, to animus against Irene: After all, they think, he wasn't a bad fellow, it wasn't his fault; she ought to have forgiven him, and so on!

And, taking sides, they lose perception of the simple truth, which underlies the whole story, that where sex attraction is utterly and definitely lacking in one partner to a union, no amount of pity, or reason, or duty, or what not, can overcome a repulsion implicit in Nature. Whether it ought to, or no, is beside the point; because in fact it never does. And where Irene seems hard and cruel, as in the Bois de Boulogne, or the Goupenor Gallery, she is but wisely realistic – knowing that the least concession is the inch which precedes the impossible, the repulsive ell.

A criticism one might pass on the last phase of the Saga is the complaint that Irene and Jolyon those rebels against property – claim spiritual property in their son Jon. But it would be hypercriticism, as the tale is told. No father and mother could have let the boy marry Fleur without knowledge of the facts; and the facts determine Jon, not the persuasion of his parents. Moreover, Jolyon's persuasion is not on his own account, but on Irene's, and Irene's persuasion becomes a reiterated: "Don't think of me, think of yourself!" That Jon, knowing the facts, can realise his mother's feelings, will hardly with justice be held proof that she is, after all, a Forsyte.

But though the impingement of Beauty and the claims of Freedom on a possessive world are the main prepossessions of the Forsyte Saga, it cannot be absolved from the charge of embalming the upper-middle class. As the old Egyptians placed around their mummies the necessaries of a future existence, so I have endeavoured to lay beside the figures of Aunts Ann and Juley and Hester, of Timothy and Swithin, of Old Jolyon and James, and of their sons, that which shall guarantee them a little life here-after, a little balm in the hurried Gilead of a dissolving "Progress."

If the upper-middle class, with other classes, is destined to "move on" into amorphism, here, pickled in these pages, it lies under glass for strollers in the wide and ill-arranged museum of Letters. Here it rests, preserved in its own juice: The Sense of Property. 1922.

*"...You will answer
The slaves are ours..."*

– Merchant of Venice.

TO EDWARD GARNETT

PART I

CHAPTER I – 'AT HOME' AT OLD JOLYON'S

Those privileged to be present at a family festival of the Forsytes have seen that charming and instructive sight – an upper middle-class family in full plumage. But whosoever of these favoured persons has possessed the gift of psychological analysis (a talent without monetary value and properly ignored by the Forsytes), has witnessed a spectacle, not only delightful in itself, but illustrative of an obscure human problem. In plainer words, he has gleaned from a gathering of this family – no branch of which had a liking for the other, between no three members of whom existed anything worthy of the name of sympathy – evidence of that mysterious concrete tenacity which renders a family so formidable a unit of society, so clear a reproduction of society in miniature. He has been admitted to a vision of the dim roads of social progress, has understood something of patriarchal life, of the swarmings of savage hordes, of the rise and fall of nations. He is like one who, having watched a tree grow from its planting – a paragon of tenacity, insulation, and success, amidst the deaths of a hundred other plants less fibrous, sappy, and persistent – one day will see it flourishing with bland, full foliage, in an almost repugnant prosperity, at the summit of its efflorescence.

On June 15, eighteen eighty-six, about four of the afternoon, the observer who chanced to be present at the house of old Jolyon Forsyte in Stanhope Gate, might have seen the highest efflorescence of the Forsytes.

This was the occasion of an 'at home' to celebrate the engagement of Miss June Forsyte, old Jolyon's granddaughter, to Mr. Philip Bosinney. In the bravery of light gloves, buff waistcoats, feathers and frocks, the family were present, even Aunt Ann, who now but seldom left the corner of her brother Timothy's green drawing-room, where, under the aegis of a plume of dyed pampas grass in a light blue vase, she sat all day reading and knitting, surrounded by the effigies of three generations of Forsytes. Even Aunt Ann was there; her inflexible back, and the dignity of her calm old face personifying the rigid possessiveness of the family idea.

When a Forsyte was engaged, married, or born, the Forsytes were present; when a Forsyte died – but no Forsyte had as yet died; they did not die; death being contrary to their principles, they took precautions against it, the instinctive precautions of highly vitalized persons who resent encroachments on their property.

About the Forsytes mingling that day with the crowd of other guests, there was a more than ordinarily groomed look, an alert, inquisitive assurance, a brilliant respectability, as though they were attired in defiance of something. The habitual sniff on the face of Soames Forsyte had spread through their ranks; they were on their guard.

The subconscious offensiveness of their attitude has constituted old Jolyon's 'home' the psychological moment of the family history, made it the prelude of their drama.

The Forsytes were resentful of something, not individually, but as a family; this resentment expressed itself in an added perfection of raiment, an exuberance of family cordiality, an exaggeration of family importance, and – the sniff. Danger – so indispensable in bringing out the fundamental quality of any society, group, or individual – was what the Forsytes scented; the premonition of danger put a burnish on their armour. For the first time, as a family, they appeared to have an instinct of being in contact, with some strange and unsafe thing.

Over against the piano a man of bulk and stature was wearing two waistcoats on his wide chest, two waistcoats and a ruby pin, instead of the single satin waistcoat and diamond pin of more usual occasions, and his shaven, square, old face, the colour of pale leather, with pale eyes, had its most dignified look, above his satin stock. This was Swithin Forsyte. Close to the window, where he could

get more than his fair share of fresh air, the other twin, James – the fat and the lean of it, old Jolyon called these brothers – like the bulky Swithin, over six feet in height, but very lean, as though destined from his birth to strike a balance and maintain an average, brooded over the scene with his permanent stoop; his grey eyes had an air of fixed absorption in some secret worry, broken at intervals by a rapid, shifting scrutiny of surrounding facts; his cheeks, thinned by two parallel folds, and a long, clean-shaven upper lip, were framed within Dundreary whiskers. In his hands he turned and turned a piece of china. Not far off, listening to a lady in brown, his only son Soames, pale and well-shaved, dark-haired, rather bald, had poked his chin up sideways, carrying his nose with that aforesaid appearance of ‘sniff,’ as though despising an egg which he knew he could not digest. Behind him his cousin, the tall George, son of the fifth Forsyte, Roger, had a Quilpish look on his fleshy face, pondering one of his sardonic jests. Something inherent to the occasion had affected them all.

Seated in a row close to one another were three ladies – Aunts Ann, Hester (the two Forsyte maids), and Juley (short for Julia), who not in first youth had so far forgotten herself as to marry Septimus Small, a man of poor constitution. She had survived him for many years. With her elder and younger sister she lived now in the house of Timothy, her sixth and youngest brother, on the Bayswater Road. Each of these ladies held fans in their hands, and each with some touch of colour, some emphatic feather or brooch, testified to the solemnity of the opportunity.

In the centre of the room, under the chandelier, as became a host, stood the head of the family, old Jolyon himself. Eighty years of age, with his fine, white hair, his dome-like forehead, his little, dark grey eyes, and an immense white moustache, which drooped and spread below the level of his strong jaw, he had a patriarchal look, and in spite of lean cheeks and hollows at his temples, seemed master of perennial youth. He held himself extremely upright, and his shrewd, steady eyes had lost none of their clear shining. Thus he gave an impression of superiority to the doubts and dislikes of smaller men. Having had his own way for innumerable years, he had earned a prescriptive right to it. It would never have occurred to old Jolyon that it was necessary to wear a look of doubt or of defiance.

Between him and the four other brothers who were present, James, Swithin, Nicholas, and Roger, there was much difference, much similarity. In turn, each of these four brothers was very different from the other, yet they, too, were alike.

Through the varying features and expression of those five faces could be marked a certain steadfastness of chin, underlying surface distinctions, marking a racial stamp, too prehistoric to trace, too remote and permanent to discuss – the very hall-mark and guarantee of the family fortunes.

Among the younger generation, in the tall, bull-like George, in pallid strenuous Archibald, in young Nicholas with his sweet and tentative obstinacy, in the grave and foppishly determined Eustace, there was this same stamp – less meaningful perhaps, but unmistakable – a sign of something ineradicable in the family soul. At one time or another during the afternoon, all these faces, so dissimilar and so alike, had worn an expression of distrust, the object of which was undoubtedly the man whose acquaintance they were thus assembled to make. Philip Bosinney was known to be a young man without fortune, but Forsyte girls had become engaged to such before, and had actually married them. It was not altogether for this reason, therefore, that the minds of the Forsytes misgave them. They could not have explained the origin of a misgiving obscured by the mist of family gossip. A story was undoubtedly told that he had paid his duty call to Aunts Ann, Juley, and Hester, in a soft grey hat – a soft grey hat, not even a new one – a dusty thing with a shapeless crown. “So, extraordinary, my dear – so odd,” Aunt Hester, passing through the little, dark hall (she was rather short-sighted), had tried to ‘shoo’ it off a chair, taking it for a strange, disreputable cat – Tommy had such disgraceful friends! She was disturbed when it did not move.

Like an artist for ever seeking to discover the significant trifle which embodies the whole character of a scene, or place, or person, so those unconscious artists – the Forsytes had fastened by intuition on this hat; it was their significant trifle, the detail in which was embedded the meaning of the whole matter; for each had asked himself: “Come, now, should I have paid that visit in that hat?”

and each had answered “No!” and some, with more imagination than others, had added: “It would never have come into my head!”

George, on hearing the story, grinned. The hat had obviously been worn as a practical joke! He himself was a connoisseur of such. “Very haughty!” he said, “the wild Buccaneer.”

And this mot, the ‘Buccaneer,’ was bandied from mouth to mouth, till it became the favourite mode of alluding to Bosinney.

Her aunts reproached June afterwards about the hat.

“We don’t think you ought to let him, dear!” they had said.

June had answered in her imperious brisk way, like the little embodiment of will she was: “Oh! what does it matter? Phil never knows what he’s got on!”

No one had credited an answer so outrageous. A man not to know what he had on? No, no! What indeed was this young man, who, in becoming engaged to June, old Jolyon’s acknowledged heiress, had done so well for himself? He was an architect, not in itself a sufficient reason for wearing such a hat. None of the Forsytes happened to be architects, but one of them knew two architects who would never have worn such a hat upon a call of ceremony in the London season.

Dangerous – ah, dangerous! June, of course, had not seen this, but, though not yet nineteen, she was notorious. Had she not said to Mrs. Soames – who was always so beautifully dressed – that feathers were vulgar? Mrs. Soames had actually given up wearing feathers, so dreadfully downright was dear June!

These misgivings, this disapproval, and perfectly genuine distrust, did not prevent the Forsytes from gathering to old Jolyon’s invitation. An ‘At Home’ at Stanhope Gate was a great rarity; none had been held for twelve years, not indeed, since old Mrs. Jolyon had died.

Never had there been so full an assembly, for, mysteriously united in spite of all their differences, they had taken arms against a common peril. Like cattle when a dog comes into the field, they stood head to head and shoulder to shoulder, prepared to run upon and trample the invader to death. They had come, too, no doubt, to get some notion of what sort of presents they would ultimately be expected to give; for though the question of wedding gifts was usually graduated in this way: ‘What are you givin’. Nicholas is givin’ spoons!’ – so very much depended on the bridegroom. If he were sleek, well-brushed, prosperous-looking, it was more necessary to give him nice things; he would expect them. In the end each gave exactly what was right and proper, by a species of family adjustment arrived at as prices are arrived at on the Stock Exchange – the exact niceties being regulated at Timothy’s commodious, red-brick residence in Bayswater, overlooking the Park, where dwelt Aunts Ann, Juley, and Hester.

The uneasiness of the Forsyte family has been justified by the simple mention of the hat. How impossible and wrong would it have been for any family, with the regard for appearances which should ever characterize the great upper middle-class, to feel otherwise than uneasy!

The author of the uneasiness stood talking to June by the further door; his curly hair had a rumpled appearance, as though he found what was going on around him unusual. He had an air, too, of having a joke all to himself. George, speaking aside to his brother, Eustace, said:

“Looks as if he might make a bolt of it – the dashing Buccaneer!”

This ‘very singular-looking man,’ as Mrs. Small afterwards called him, was of medium height and strong build, with a pale, brown face, a dust-coloured moustache, very prominent cheek-bones, and hollow checks. His forehead sloped back towards the crown of his head, and bulged out in bumps over the eyes, like foreheads seen in the Lion-house at the Zoo. He had sherry-coloured eyes, disconcertingly inattentive at times. Old Jolyon’s coachman, after driving June and Bosinney to the theatre, had remarked to the butler:

“I dunno what to make of ‘im. Looks to me for all the world like an ‘alf-tame leopard.” And every now and then a Forsyte would come up, sidle round, and take a look at him.

June stood in front, fending off this idle curiosity – a little bit of a thing, as somebody once said, ‘all hair and spirit,’ with fearless blue eyes, a firm jaw, and a bright colour, whose face and body seemed too slender for her crown of red-gold hair.

A tall woman, with a beautiful figure, which some member of the family had once compared to a heathen goddess, stood looking at these two with a shadowy smile.

Her hands, gloved in French grey, were crossed one over the other, her grave, charming face held to one side, and the eyes of all men near were fastened on it. Her figure swayed, so balanced that the very air seemed to set it moving. There was warmth, but little colour, in her cheeks; her large, dark eyes were soft.

But it was at her lips – asking a question, giving an answer, with that shadowy smile – that men looked; they were sensitive lips, sensuous and sweet, and through them seemed to come warmth and perfume like the warmth and perfume of a flower.

The engaged couple thus scrutinized were unconscious of this passive goddess. It was Bosinney who first noticed her, and asked her name.

June took her lover up to the woman with the beautiful figure.

“Irene is my greatest chum,” she said: “Please be good friends, you two!”

At the little lady’s command they all three smiled; and while they were smiling, Soames Forsyte, silently appearing from behind the woman with the beautiful figure, who was his wife, said:

“Ah! introduce me too!”

He was seldom, indeed, far from Irene’s side at public functions, and even when separated by the exigencies of social intercourse, could be seen following her about with his eyes, in which were strange expressions of watchfulness and longing.

At the window his father, James, was still scrutinizing the marks on the piece of china.

“I wonder at Jolyon’s allowing this engagement,” he said to Aunt Ann. “They tell me there’s no chance of their getting married for years. This young Bosinney” (he made the word a dactyl in opposition to general usage of a short o) “has got nothing. When Winifred married Dartie, I made him bring every penny into settlement – lucky thing, too – they’d ha’ had nothing by this time!”

Aunt Ann looked up from her velvet chair. Grey curls banded her forehead, curls that, unchanged for decades, had extinguished in the family all sense of time. She made no reply, for she rarely spoke, husbanding her aged voice; but to James, uneasy of conscience, her look was as good as an answer.

“Well,” he said, “I couldn’t help Irene’s having no money. Soames was in such a hurry; he got quite thin dancing attendance on her.”

Putting the bowl pettishly down on the piano, he let his eyes wander to the group by the door.

“It’s my opinion,” he said unexpectedly, “that it’s just as well as it is.”

Aunt Ann did not ask him to explain this strange utterance. She knew what he was thinking. If Irene had no money she would not be so foolish as to do anything wrong; for they said – they said – she had been asking for a separate room; but, of course, Soames had not...

James interrupted her reverie:

“But where,” he asked, “was Timothy? Hadn’t he come with them?”

Through Aunt Ann’s compressed lips a tender smile forced its way:

“No, he didn’t think it wise, with so much of this diphtheria about; and he so liable to take things.”

James answered:

“Well, HE takes good care of himself. I can’t afford to take the care of myself that he does.”

Nor was it easy to say which, of admiration, envy, or contempt, was dominant in that remark.

Timothy, indeed, was seldom seen. The baby of the family, a publisher by profession, he had some years before, when business was at full tide, scented out the stagnation which, indeed, had not yet come, but which ultimately, as all agreed, was bound to set in, and, selling his share in a firm

engaged mainly in the production of religious books, had invested the quite conspicuous proceeds in three per cent. consols. By this act he had at once assumed an isolated position, no other Forsyte being content with less than four per cent. for his money; and this isolation had slowly and surely undermined a spirit perhaps better than commonly endowed with caution. He had become almost a myth – a kind of incarnation of security haunting the background of the Forsyte universe. He had never committed the imprudence of marrying, or encumbering himself in any way with children.

James resumed, tapping the piece of china:

“This isn’t real old Worcester. I s’pose Jolyon’s told you something about the young man. From all I can learn, he’s got no business, no income, and no connection worth speaking of; but then, I know nothing – nobody tells me anything.”

Aunt Ann shook her head. Over her square-chinned, aquiline old face a trembling passed; the spidery fingers of her hands pressed against each other and interlaced, as though she were subtly recharging her will.

The eldest by some years of all the Forsytes, she held a peculiar position amongst them. Opportunists and egotists one and all – though not, indeed, more so than their neighbours – they quailed before her incorruptible figure, and, when opportunities were too strong, what could they do but avoid her!

Twisting his long, thin legs, James went on:

“Jolyon, he will have his own way. He’s got no children” – and stopped, recollecting the continued existence of old Jolyon’s son, young Jolyon, June’s father, who had made such a mess of it, and done for himself by deserting his wife and child and running away with that foreign governess. “Well,” he resumed hastily, “if he likes to do these things, I s’pose he can afford to. Now, what’s he going to give her? I s’pose he’ll give her a thousand a year; he’s got nobody else to leave his money to.”

He stretched out his hand to meet that of a dapper, clean-shaven man, with hardly a hair on his head, a long, broken nose, full lips, and cold grey eyes under rectangular brows.

“Well, Nick,” he muttered, “how are you?”

Nicholas Forsyte, with his bird-like rapidity and the look of a preternaturally sage schoolboy (he had made a large fortune, quite legitimately, out of the companies of which he was a director), placed within that cold palm the tips of his still colder fingers and hastily withdrew them.

“I’m bad,” he said, pouting – “been bad all the week; don’t sleep at night. The doctor can’t tell why. He’s a clever fellow, or I shouldn’t have him, but I get nothing out of him but bills.”

“Doctors!” said James, coming down sharp on his words: “I’ve had all the doctors in London for one or another of us. There’s no satisfaction to be got out of them; they’ll tell you anything. There’s Swithin, now. What good have they done him? There he is; he’s bigger than ever; he’s enormous; they can’t get his weight down. Look at him!”

Swithin Forsyte, tall, square, and broad, with a chest like a pouter pigeon’s in its plumage of bright waistcoats, came strutting towards them.

“Er – how are you?” he said in his dandified way, aspirating the ‘h’ strongly (this difficult letter was almost absolutely safe in his keeping) – “how are you?”

Each brother wore an air of aggravation as he looked at the other two, knowing by experience that they would try to eclipse his ailments.

“We were just saying,” said James, “that you don’t get any thinner.”

Swithin protruded his pale round eyes with the effort of hearing.

“Thinner? I’m in good case,” he said, leaning a little forward, “not one of your thread-papers like you!”

But, afraid of losing the expansion of his chest, he leaned back again into a state of immobility, for he prized nothing so highly as a distinguished appearance.

Aunt Ann turned her old eyes from one to the other. Indulgent and severe was her look. In turn the three brothers looked at Ann. She was getting shaky. Wonderful woman! Eighty-six if a

day; might live another ten years, and had never been strong. Swithin and James, the twins, were only seventy-five, Nicholas a mere baby of seventy or so. All were strong, and the inference was comforting. Of all forms of property their respective healths naturally concerned them most.

"I'm very well in myself," proceeded James, "but my nerves are out of order. The least thing worries me to death. I shall have to go to Bath."

"Bath!" said Nicholas. "I've tried Harrogate. That's no good. What I want is sea air. There's nothing like Yarmouth. Now, when I go there I sleep..."

"My liver's very bad," interrupted Swithin slowly. "Dreadful pain here;" and he placed his hand on his right side.

"Want of exercise," muttered James, his eyes on the china. He quickly added: "I get a pain there, too."

Swithin reddened, a resemblance to a turkey-cock coming upon his old face.

"Exercise!" he said. "I take plenty: I never use the lift at the Club."

"I didn't know," James hurried out. "I know nothing about anybody; nobody tells me anything..."

Swithin fixed him with a stare:

"What do you do for a pain there?"

James brightened.

"I take a compound..."

"How are you, uncle?"

June stood before him, her resolute small face raised from her little height to his great height, and her hand outtheld.

The brightness faded from James's visage.

"How are you?" he said, brooding over her. "So you're going to Wales to-morrow to visit your young man's aunts? You'll have a lot of rain there. This isn't real old Worcester." He tapped the bowl. "Now, that set I gave your mother when she married was the genuine thing."

June shook hands one by one with her three great-uncles, and turned to Aunt Ann. A very sweet look had come into the old lady's face, she kissed the girl's cheek with trembling fervour.

"Well, my dear," she said, "and so you're going for a whole month!"

The girl passed on, and Aunt Ann looked after her slim little figure. The old lady's round, steel grey eyes, over which a film like a bird's was beginning to come, followed her wistfully amongst the bustling crowd, for people were beginning to say good-bye; and her finger-tips, pressing and pressing against each other, were busy again with the recharging of her will against that inevitable ultimate departure of her own.

'Yes,' she thought, 'everybody's been most kind; quite a lot of people come to congratulate her. She ought to be very happy.' Amongst the throng of people by the door, the well-dressed throng drawn from the families of lawyers and doctors, from the Stock Exchange, and all the innumerable avocations of the upper-middle class – there were only some twenty percent of Forsytes; but to Aunt Ann they seemed all Forsytes – and certainly there was not much difference – she saw only her own flesh and blood. It was her world, this family, and she knew no other, had never perhaps known any other. All their little secrets, illnesses, engagements, and marriages, how they were getting on, and whether they were making money – all this was her property, her delight, her life; beyond this only a vague, shadowy mist of facts and persons of no real significance. This it was that she would have to lay down when it came to her turn to die; this which gave to her that importance, that secret self-importance, without which none of us can bear to live; and to this she clung wistfully, with a greed that grew each day! If life were slipping away from her, this she would retain to the end.

She thought of June's father, young Jolyon, who had run away with that foreign girl. And what a sad blow to his father and to them all. Such a promising young fellow! A sad blow, though there had been no public scandal, most fortunately, Jo's wife seeking for no divorce! A long time ago! And when

June's mother died, six years ago, Jo had married that woman, and they had two children now, so she had heard. Still, he had forfeited his right to be there, had cheated her of the complete fulfilment of her family pride, deprived her of the rightful pleasure of seeing and kissing him of whom she had been so proud, such a promising young fellow! The thought rankled with the bitterness of a long-inflicted injury in her tenacious old heart. A little water stood in her eyes. With a handkerchief of the finest lawn she wiped them stealthily.

"Well, Aunt Ann?" said a voice behind.

Soames Forsyte, flat-shouldered, clean-shaven, flat-cheeked, flat-waisted, yet with something round and secret about his whole appearance, looked downwards and aslant at Aunt Ann, as though trying to see through the side of his own nose.

"And what do you think of the engagement?" he asked.

Aunt Ann's eyes rested on him proudly; of all the nephews since young Jolyon's departure from the family nest, he was now her favourite, for she recognised in him a sure trustee of the family soul that must so soon slip beyond her keeping.

"Very nice for the young man," she said; "and he's a good-looking young fellow; but I doubt if he's quite the right lover for dear June."

Soames touched the edge of a gold-lacquered lustre.

"She'll tame him," he said, stealthily wetting his finger and rubbing it on the knobby bulbs. "That's genuine old lacquer; you can't get it nowadays. It'd do well in a sale at Jobson's." He spoke with relish, as though he felt that he was cheering up his old aunt. It was seldom he was so confidential. "I wouldn't mind having it myself," he added; "you can always get your price for old lacquer."

"You're so clever with all those things," said Aunt Ann. "And how is dear Irene?"

Soames's smile died.

"Pretty well," he said. "Complains she can't sleep; she sleeps a great deal better than I do," and he looked at his wife, who was talking to Bosinney by the door.

Aunt Ann sighed.

"Perhaps," she said, "it will be just as well for her not to see so much of June. She's such a decided character, dear June!"

Soames flushed; his flushes passed rapidly over his flat cheeks and centered between his eyes, where they remained, the stamp of disturbing thoughts.

"I don't know what she sees in that little flibbertigibbet," he burst out, but noticing that they were no longer alone, he turned and again began examining the lustre.

"They tell me Jolyon's bought another house," said his father's voice close by; "he must have a lot of money – he must have more money than he knows what to do with! Montpellier Square, they say; close to Soames! They never told me, Irene never tells me anything!"

"Capital position, not two minutes from me," said the voice of Swithin, "and from my rooms I can drive to the Club in eight."

The position of their houses was of vital importance to the Forsytes, nor was this remarkable, since the whole spirit of their success was embodied therein.

Their father, of farming stock, had come from Dorsetshire near the beginning of the century.

'Superior Dosset Forsyte, as he was called by his intimates, had been a stonemason by trade, and risen to the position of a master-builder.

Towards the end of his life he moved to London, where, building on until he died, he was buried at Highgate. He left over thirty thousand pounds between his ten children. Old Jolyon alluded to him, if at all, as 'A hard, thick sort of man; not much refinement about him.' The second generation of Forsytes felt indeed that he was not greatly to their credit. The only aristocratic trait they could find in his character was a habit of drinking Madeira.

Aunt Hester, an authority on family history, described him thus: "I don't recollect that he ever did anything; at least, not in my time. He was er – an owner of houses, my dear. His hair about your

Uncle Swithin's colour; rather a square build. Tall? No – not very tall" (he had been five feet five, with a mottled face); "a fresh-coloured man. I remember he used to drink Madeira; but ask your Aunt Ann. What was his father? He – er – had to do with the land down in Dorsetshire, by the sea."

James once went down to see for himself what sort of place this was that they had come from. He found two old farms, with a cart track rutted into the pink earth, leading down to a mill by the beach; a little grey church with a buttressed outer wall, and a smaller and greyer chapel. The stream which worked the mill came bubbling down in a dozen rivulets, and pigs were hunting round that estuary. A haze hovered over the prospect. Down this hollow, with their feet deep in the mud and their faces towards the sea, it appeared that the primeval Forsytes had been content to walk Sunday after Sunday for hundreds of years.

Whether or no James had cherished hopes of an inheritance, or of something rather distinguished to be found down there, he came back to town in a poor way, and went about with a pathetic attempt at making the best of a bad job.

"There's very little to be had out of that," he said; "regular country little place, old as the hills..."

Its age was felt to be a comfort. Old Jolyon, in whom a desperate honesty welled up at times, would allude to his ancestors as: "Yeomen – I suppose very small beer." Yet he would repeat the word 'yeomen' as if it afforded him consolation.

They had all done so well for themselves, these Forsytes, that they were all what is called 'of a certain position.' They had shares in all sorts of things, not as yet – with the exception of Timothy – in consols, for they had no dread in life like that of 3 per cent. for their money. They collected pictures, too, and were supporters of such charitable institutions as might be beneficial to their sick domestics. From their father, the builder, they inherited a talent for bricks and mortar. Originally, perhaps, members of some primitive sect, they were now in the natural course of things members of the Church of England, and caused their wives and children to attend with some regularity the more fashionable churches of the Metropolis. To have doubted their Christianity would have caused them both pain and surprise. Some of them paid for pews, thus expressing in the most practical form their sympathy with the teachings of Christ.

Their residences, placed at stated intervals round the park, watched like sentinels, lest the fair heart of this London, where their desires were fixed, should slip from their clutches, and leave them lower in their own estimations.

There was old Jolyon in Stanhope Place; the Jameses in Park Lane; Swithin in the lonely glory of orange and blue chambers in Hyde Park Mansions – he had never married, not he – the Soamses in their nest off Knightsbridge; the Rogers in Prince's Gardens (Roger was that remarkable Forsyte who had conceived and carried out the notion of bringing up his four sons to a new profession. "Collect house property, nothing like it," he would say; "I never did anything else").

The Haymans again – Mrs. Hayman was the one married Forsyte sister – in a house high up on Campden Hill, shaped like a giraffe, and so tall that it gave the observer a crick in the neck; the Nicholases in Ladbroke Grove, a spacious abode and a great bargain; and last, but not least, Timothy's on the Bayswater Road, where Ann, and Juley, and Hester, lived under his protection.

But all this time James was musing, and now he inquired of his host and brother what he had given for that house in Montpellier Square. He himself had had his eye on a house there for the last two years, but they wanted such a price.

Old Jolyon recounted the details of his purchase.

"Twenty-two years to run?" repeated James; "The very house I was after – you've given too much for it!"

Old Jolyon frowned.

"It's not that I want it," said James hastily; "it wouldn't suit my purpose at that price. Soames knows the house, well – he'll tell you it's too dear – his opinion's worth having."

"I don't," said old Jolyon, "care a fig for his opinion."

“Well,” murmured James, “you will have your own way – it’s a good opinion. Good-bye! We’re going to drive down to Hurlingham. They tell me June’s going to Wales. You’ll be lonely tomorrow. What’ll you do with yourself? You’d better come and dine with us!”

Old Jolyon refused. He went down to the front door and saw them into their barouche, and twinkled at them, having already forgotten his spleen – Mrs. James facing the horses, tall and majestic with auburn hair; on her left, Irene – the two husbands, father and son, sitting forward, as though they expected something, opposite their wives. Bobbing and bounding upon the spring cushions, silent, swaying to each motion of their chariot, old Jolyon watched them drive away under the sunlight.

During the drive the silence was broken by Mrs. James.

“Did you ever see such a collection of rumty-too people?”

Soames, glancing at her beneath his eyelids, nodded, and he saw Irene steal at him one of her unfathomable looks. It is likely enough that each branch of the Forsyte family made that remark as they drove away from old Jolyon’s ‘At Home!’

Amongst the last of the departing guests the fourth and fifth brothers, Nicholas and Roger, walked away together, directing their steps alongside Hyde Park towards the Praed Street Station of the Underground. Like all other Forsytes of a certain age they kept carriages of their own, and never took cabs if by any means they could avoid it.

The day was bright, the trees of the Park in the full beauty of mid-June foliage; the brothers did not seem to notice phenomena, which contributed, nevertheless, to the jauntiness of promenade and conversation.

“Yes,” said Roger, “she’s a good-lookin’ woman, that wife of Soames’s. I’m told they don’t get on.”

This brother had a high forehead, and the freshest colour of any of the Forsytes; his light grey eyes measured the street frontage of the houses by the way, and now and then he would level his, umbrella and take a ‘lunar,’ as he expressed it, of the varying heights.

“She’d no money,” replied Nicholas.

He himself had married a good deal of money, of which, it being then the golden age before the Married Women’s Property Act, he had mercifully been enabled to make a successful use.

“What was her father?”

“Heron was his name, a Professor, so they tell me.”

Roger shook his head.

“There’s no money in that,” he said.

“They say her mother’s father was cement.”

Roger’s face brightened.

“But he went bankrupt,” went on Nicholas.

“Ah!” exclaimed Roger, “Soames will have trouble with her; you mark my words, he’ll have trouble – she’s got a foreign look.”

Nicholas licked his lips.

“She’s a pretty woman,” and he waved aside a crossing-sweeper.

“How did he get hold of her?” asked Roger presently. “She must cost him a pretty penny in dress!”

“Ann tells me,” replied Nicholas, “he was half-cracked about her. She refused him five times. James, he’s nervous about it, I can see.”

“Ah!” said Roger again; “I’m sorry for James; he had trouble with Dartie.” His pleasant colour was heightened by exercise, he swung his umbrella to the level of his eye more frequently than ever. Nicholas’s face also wore a pleasant look.

“Too pale for me,” he said, “but her figures capital!”

Roger made no reply.

“I call her distinguished-looking,” he said at last – it was the highest praise in the Forsyte vocabulary. “That young Bosinney will never do any good for himself. They say at Burkitt’s he’s one of these artistic chaps – got an idea of improving English architecture; there’s no money in that! I should like to hear what Timothy would say to it.”

They entered the station.

“What class are you going? I go second.”

“No second for me,” said Nicholas; – “you never know what you may catch.”

He took a first-class ticket to Notting Hill Gate; Roger a second to South Kensington. The train coming in a minute later, the two brothers parted and entered their respective compartments. Each felt aggrieved that the other had not modified his habits to secure his society a little longer; but as Roger voiced it in his thoughts:

‘Always a stubborn beggar, Nick!’

And as Nicholas expressed it to himself:

‘Cantankerous chap Roger – always was!’

There was little sentimentality about the Forsytes. In that great London, which they had conquered and become merged in, what time had they to be sentimental?

CHAPTER II – OLD JOLYON GOES TO THE OPERA

At five o'clock the following day old Jolyon sat alone, a cigar between his lips, and on a table by his side a cup of tea. He was tired, and before he had finished his cigar he fell asleep. A fly settled on his hair, his breathing sounded heavy in the drowsy silence, his upper lip under the white moustache puffed in and out. From between the fingers of his veined and wrinkled hand the cigar, dropping on the empty hearth, burned itself out.

The gloomy little study, with windows of stained glass to exclude the view, was full of dark green velvet and heavily-carved mahogany – a suite of which old Jolyon was wont to say: 'Shouldn't wonder if it made a big price some day!'

It was pleasant to think that in the after life he could get more for things than he had given.

In the rich brown atmosphere peculiar to back rooms in the mansion of a Forsyte, the Rembrandtesque effect of his great head, with its white hair, against the cushion of his high-backed seat, was spoiled by the moustache, which imparted a somewhat military look to his face. An old clock that had been with him since before his marriage forty years ago kept with its ticking a jealous record of the seconds slipping away forever from its old master.

He had never cared for this room, hardly going into it from one year's end to another, except to take cigars from the Japanese cabinet in the corner, and the room now had its revenge.

His temples, curving like thatches over the hollows beneath, his cheek-bones and chin, all were sharpened in his sleep, and there had come upon his face the confession that he was an old man.

He woke. June had gone! James had said he would be lonely. James had always been a poor thing. He recollected with satisfaction that he had bought that house over James's head.

Serve him right for sticking at the price; the only thing the fellow thought of was money. Had he given too much, though? It wanted a lot of doing to – He dared say he would want all his money before he had done with this affair of June's. He ought never to have allowed the engagement. She had met this Bosinney at the house of Baynes, Baynes and Bildeboy, the architects. He believed that Baynes, whom he knew – a bit of an old woman – was the young man's uncle by marriage. After that she'd been always running after him; and when she took a thing into her head there was no stopping her. She was continually taking up with 'lame ducks' of one sort or another. This fellow had no money, but she must needs become engaged to him – a harumscarum, unpractical chap, who would get himself into no end of difficulties.

She had come to him one day in her slap-dash way and told him; and, as if it were any consolation, she had added:

"He's so splendid; he's often lived on cocoa for a week!"

"And he wants you to live on cocoa too?"

"Oh no; he is getting into the swim now."

Old Jolyon had taken his cigar from under his white moustaches, stained by coffee at the edge, and looked at her, that little slip of a thing who had got such a grip of his heart. He knew more about 'swims' than his granddaughter. But she, having clasped her hands on his knees, rubbed her chin against him, making a sound like a purring cat. And, knocking the ash off his cigar, he had exploded in nervous desperation:

"You're all alike: you won't be satisfied till you've got what you want. If you must come to grief, you must; I wash my hands of it."

So, he had washed his hands of it, making the condition that they should not marry until Bosinney had at least four hundred a year.

"I shan't be able to give you very much," he had said, a formula to which June was not unaccustomed. "Perhaps this What's-his-name will provide the cocoa."

He had hardly seen anything of her since it began. A bad business! He had no notion of giving her a lot of money to enable a fellow he knew nothing about to live on in idleness. He had seen that sort of thing before; no good ever came of it. Worst of all, he had no hope of shaking her resolution; she was as obstinate as a mule, always had been from a child. He didn't see where it was to end. They must cut their coat according to their cloth. He would not give way till he saw young Bosinney with an income of his own. That June would have trouble with the fellow was as plain as a pikestaff; he had no more idea of money than a cow. As to this rushing down to Wales to visit the young man's aunts, he fully expected they were old cats.

And, motionless, old Jolyon stared at the wall; but for his open eyes, he might have been asleep... The idea of supposing that young cub Soames could give him advice! He had always been a cub, with his nose in the air! He would be setting up as a man of property next, with a place in the country! A man of property! H'mph! Like his father, he was always nosing out bargains, a cold-blooded young beggar!

He rose, and, going to the cabinet, began methodically stocking his cigar-case from a bundle fresh in. They were not bad at the price, but you couldn't get a good cigar, nowadays, nothing to hold a candle to those old Superfinos of Hanson and Bridger's. That was a cigar!

The thought, like some stealing perfume, carried him back to those wonderful nights at Richmond when after dinner he sat smoking on the terrace of the Crown and Sceptre with Nicholas Treffry and Traquair and Jack Herring and Anthony Thornworthy. How good his cigars were then! Poor old Nick! – dead, and Jack Herring – dead, and Traquair – dead of that wife of his, and Thornworthy – awfully shaky (no wonder, with his appetite).

Of all the company of those days he himself alone seemed left, except Swithin, of course, and he so outrageously big there was no doing anything with him.

Difficult to believe it was so long ago; he felt young still! Of all his thoughts, as he stood there counting his cigars, this was the most poignant, the most bitter. With his white head and his loneliness he had remained young and green at heart. And those Sunday afternoons on Hampstead Heath, when young Jolyon and he went for a stretch along the Spaniard's Road to Highgate, to Child's Hill, and back over the Heath again to dine at Jack Straw's Castle – how delicious his cigars were then! And such weather! There was no weather now.

When June was a toddler of five, and every other Sunday he took her to the Zoo, away from the society of those two good women, her mother and her grandmother, and at the top of the bear den baited his umbrella with buns for her favourite bears, how sweet his cigars were then!

Cigars! He had not even succeeded in out-living his palate – the famous palate that in the fifties men swore by, and speaking of him, said: "Forsyte's the best palate in London!" The palate that in a sense had made his fortune – the fortune of the celebrated tea men, Forsyte and Treffry, whose tea, like no other man's tea, had a romantic aroma, the charm of a quite singular genuineness. About the house of Forsyte and Treffry in the City had clung an air of enterprise and mystery, of special dealings in special ships, at special ports, with special Orientals.

He had worked at that business! Men did work in those days! these young pups hardly knew the meaning of the word. He had gone into every detail, known everything that went on, sometimes sat up all night over it. And he had always chosen his agents himself, prided himself on it. His eye for men, he used to say, had been the secret of his success, and the exercise of this masterful power of selection had been the only part of it all that he had really liked. Not a career for a man of his ability. Even now, when the business had been turned into a Limited Liability Company, and was declining (he had got out of his shares long ago), he felt a sharp chagrin in thinking of that time. How much better he might have done! He would have succeeded splendidly at the Bar! He had even thought of standing for Parliament. How often had not Nicholas Treffry said to him:

"You could do anything, Jo, if you weren't so d-damned careful of yourself!" Dear old Nick! Such a good fellow, but a racketty chap! The notorious Treffry! He had never taken any care of

himself. So he was dead. Old Jolyon counted his cigars with a steady hand, and it came into his mind to wonder if perhaps he had been too careful of himself.

He put the cigar-case in the breast of his coat, buttoned it in, and walked up the long flights to his bedroom, leaning on one foot and the other, and helping himself by the bannister. The house was too big. After June was married, if she ever did marry this fellow, as he supposed she would, he would let it and go into rooms. What was the use of keeping half a dozen servants eating their heads off?

The butler came to the ring of his bell – a large man with a beard, a soft tread, and a peculiar capacity for silence. Old Jolyon told him to put his dress clothes out; he was going to dine at the Club.

How long had the carriage been back from taking Miss June to the station? Since two? Then let him come round at half-past six!

The Club which old Jolyon entered on the stroke of seven was one of those political institutions of the upper middle class which have seen better days. In spite of being talked about, perhaps in consequence of being talked about, it betrayed a disappointing vitality. People had grown tired of saying that the 'Disunion' was on its last legs. Old Jolyon would say it, too, yet disregarded the fact in a manner truly irritating to well-constituted Clubmen.

"Why do you keep your name on?" Swithin often asked him with profound vexation. "Why don't you join the 'Polyglot'. You can't get a wine like our Heidsieck under twenty shillin' a bottle anywhere in London;" and, dropping his voice, he added: "There's only five hundred dozen left. I drink it every night of my life."

"I'll think of it," old Jolyon would answer; but when he did think of it there was always the question of fifty guineas entrance fee, and it would take him four or five years to get in. He continued to think of it.

He was too old to be a Liberal, had long ceased to believe in the political doctrines of his Club, had even been known to allude to them as 'wretched stuff,' and it afforded him pleasure to continue a member in the teeth of principles so opposed to his own. He had always had a contempt for the place, having joined it many years ago when they refused to have him at the 'Hotch Potch' owing to his being 'in trade.' As if he were not as good as any of them! He naturally despised the Club that did take him. The members were a poor lot, many of them in the City – stockbrokers, solicitors, auctioneers – what not! Like most men of strong character but not too much originality, old Jolyon set small store by the class to which he belonged. Faithfully he followed their customs, social and otherwise, and secretly he thought them 'a common lot.'

Years and philosophy, of which he had his share, had dimmed the recollection of his defeat at the 'Hotch Potch'. and now in his thoughts it was enshrined as the Queen of Clubs. He would have been a member all these years himself, but, owing to the slipshod way his proposer, Jack Herring, had gone to work, they had not known what they were doing in keeping him out. Why! they had taken his son Jo at once, and he believed the boy was still a member; he had received a letter dated from there eight years ago.

He had not been near the 'Disunion' for months, and the house had undergone the piebald decoration which people bestow on old houses and old ships when anxious to sell them.

'Beastly colour, the smoking-room!' he thought. 'The dining-room is good!'

Its gloomy chocolate, picked out with light green, took his fancy.

He ordered dinner, and sat down in the very corner, at the very table perhaps! (things did not progress much at the 'Disunion,' a Club of almost Radical principles) at which he and young Jolyon used to sit twenty-five years ago, when he was taking the latter to Drury Lane, during his holidays.

The boy had loved the theatre, and old Jolyon recalled how he used to sit opposite, concealing his excitement under a careful but transparent nonchalance.

He ordered himself, too, the very dinner the boy had always chosen-soup, whitebait, cutlets, and a tart. Ah! if he were only opposite now!

The two had not met for fourteen years. And not for the first time during those fourteen years old Jolyon wondered whether he had been a little to blame in the matter of his son. An unfortunate love-affair with that precious flirt Danae Thornworthy (now Danae Pellew), Anthony Thornworthy's daughter, had thrown him on the rebound into the arms of June's mother. He ought perhaps to have put a spoke in the wheel of their marriage; they were too young; but after that experience of Jo's susceptibility he had been only too anxious to see him married. And in four years the crash had come! To have approved his son's conduct in that crash was, of course, impossible; reason and training – that combination of potent factors which stood for his principles – told him of this impossibility, and his heart cried out. The grim remorselessness of that business had no pity for hearts. There was June, the atom with flaming hair, who had climbed all over him, twined and twisted herself about him – about his heart that was made to be the plaything and beloved resort of tiny, helpless things. With characteristic insight he saw he must part with one or with the other; no half-measures could serve in such a situation. In that lay its tragedy. And the tiny, helpless thing prevailed. He would not run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, and so to his son he said good-bye.

That good-bye had lasted until now.

He had proposed to continue a reduced allowance to young Jolyon, but this had been refused, and perhaps that refusal had hurt him more than anything, for with it had gone the last outlet of his penned-in affection; and there had come such tangible and solid proof of rupture as only a transaction in property, a bestowal or refusal of such, could supply.

His dinner tasted flat. His pint of champagne was dry and bitter stuff, not like the *Veuve Clicquot*s of old days.

Over his cup of coffee, he bethought him that he would go to the opera. In the *Times*, therefore – he had a distrust of other papers – he read the announcement for the evening. It was 'Fidelio.'

Mercifully not one of those new-fangled German pantomimes by that fellow Wagner.

Putting on his ancient opera hat, which, with its brim flattened by use, and huge capacity, looked like an emblem of greater days, and, pulling out an old pair of very thin lavender kid gloves smelling strongly of Russia leather, from habitual proximity to the cigar-case in the pocket of his overcoat, he stepped into a hansom.

The cab rattled gaily along the streets, and old Jolyon was struck by their unwonted animation.

'The hotels must be doing a tremendous business,' he thought. A few years ago there had been none of these big hotels. He made a satisfactory reflection on some property he had in the neighbourhood. It must be going up in value by leaps and bounds! What traffic!

But from that he began indulging in one of those strange impersonal speculations, so uncharacteristic of a Forsyte, wherein lay, in part, the secret of his supremacy amongst them. What atoms men were, and what a lot of them! And what would become of them all?

He stumbled as he got out of the cab, gave the man his exact fare, walked up to the ticket office to take his stall, and stood there with his purse in his hand – he always carried his money in a purse, never having approved of that habit of carrying it loosely in the pockets, as so many young men did nowadays. The official leaned out, like an old dog from a kennel.

"Why," he said in a surprised voice, "it's Mr. Jolyon Forsyte! So it is! Haven't seen you, sir, for years. Dear me! Times aren't what they were. Why! you and your brother, and that auctioneer – Mr. Traquair, and Mr. Nicholas Treffry – you used to have six or seven stalls here regular every season. And how are you, sir? We don't get younger!"

The colour in old Jolyon's eyes deepened; he paid his guinea. They had not forgotten him. He marched in, to the sounds of the overture, like an old war-horse to battle.

Folding his opera hat, he sat down, drew out his lavender gloves in the old way, and took up his glasses for a long look round the house. Dropping them at last on his folded hat, he fixed his eyes on the curtain. More poignantly than ever he felt that it was all over and done with him. Where were all the women, the pretty women, the house used to be so full of? Where was that old feeling in the

heart as he waited for one of those great singers? Where that sensation of the intoxication of life and of his own power to enjoy it all?

The greatest opera-goer of his day! There was no opera now! That fellow Wagner had ruined everything; no melody left, nor any voices to sing it. Ah! the wonderful singers! Gone! He sat watching the old scenes acted, a numb feeling at his heart.

From the curl of silver over his ear to the pose of his foot in its elastic-sided patent boot, there was nothing clumsy or weak about old Jolyon. He was as upright – very nearly – as in those old times when he came every night; his sight was as good – almost as good. But what a feeling of weariness and disillusion!

He had been in the habit all his life of enjoying things, even imperfect things – and there had been many imperfect things – he had enjoyed them all with moderation, so as to keep himself young. But now he was deserted by his power of enjoyment, by his philosophy, and left with this dreadful feeling that it was all done with. Not even the Prisoners' Chorus, nor Florian's Song, had the power to dispel the gloom of his loneliness.

If Jo were only with him! The boy must be forty by now. He had wasted fourteen years out of the life of his only son. And Jo was no longer a social pariah. He was married. Old Jolyon had been unable to refrain from marking his appreciation of the action by enclosing his son a cheque for L500. The cheque had been returned in a letter from the 'Hotch Potch,' couched in these words.

'MY DEAREST FATHER,

'Your generous gift was welcome as a sign that you might think worse of me. I return it, but should you think fit to invest it for the benefit of the little chap (we call him Jolly), who bears our Christian and, by courtesy, our surname, I shall be very glad.

'I hope with all my heart that your health is as good as ever.

'Your loving son,

'Jo.'

The letter was like the boy. He had always been an amiable chap. Old Jolyon had sent this reply:

'MY DEAR JO,

'The sum (L500) stands in my books for the benefit of your boy, under the name of Jolyon Forsyte, and will be duly-credited with interest at 5 per cent. I hope that you are doing well. My health remains good at present.

'With love, I am,

'Your affectionate Father,

'JOLYON FORSYTE.'

And every year on the 1st of January he had added a hundred and the interest. The sum was mounting up – next New Year's Day it would be fifteen hundred and odd pounds! And it is difficult to say how much satisfaction he had got out of that yearly transaction. But the correspondence had ended.

In spite of his love for his son, in spite of an instinct, partly constitutional, partly the result, as in thousands of his class, of the continual handling and watching of affairs, prompting him to judge conduct by results rather than by principle, there was at the bottom of his heart a sort of uneasiness. His son ought, under the circumstances, to have gone to the dogs; that law was laid down in all the novels, sermons, and plays he had ever read, heard, or witnessed.

After receiving the cheque back there seemed to him to be something wrong somewhere. Why had his son not gone to the dogs? But, then, who could tell?

He had heard, of course – in fact, he had made it his business to find out – that Jo lived in St. John's Wood, that he had a little house in Wistaria Avenue with a garden, and took his wife about with him into society – a queer sort of society, no doubt – and that they had two children – the little chap they called Jolly (considering the circumstances the name struck him as cynical, and old Jolyon both feared and disliked cynicism), and a girl called Holly, born since the marriage. Who could tell what

his son's circumstances really were? He had capitalized the income he had inherited from his mother's father and joined Lloyd's as an underwriter; he painted pictures, too – water-colours. Old Jolyon knew this, for he had surreptitiously bought them from time to time, after chancing to see his son's name signed at the bottom of a representation of the river Thames in a dealer's window. He thought them bad, and did not hang them because of the signature; he kept them locked up in a drawer.

In the great opera-house a terrible yearning came on him to see his son. He remembered the days when he had been wont to slide him, in a brown holland suit, to and fro under the arch of his legs; the times when he ran beside the boy's pony, teaching him to ride; the day he first took him to school. He had been a loving, lovable little chap! After he went to Eton he had acquired, perhaps, a little too much of that desirable manner which old Jolyon knew was only to be obtained at such places and at great expense; but he had always been companionable. Always a companion, even after Cambridge – a little far off, perhaps, owing to the advantages he had received. Old Jolyon's feeling towards our public schools and 'Varsities never wavered, and he retained touchingly his attitude of admiration and mistrust towards a system appropriate to the highest in the land, of which he had not himself been privileged to partake... Now that June had gone and left, or as good as left him, it would have been a comfort to see his son again. Guilty of this treason to his family, his principles, his class, old Jolyon fixed his eyes on the singer. A poor thing – a wretched poor thing! And the Florian a perfect stick!

It was over. They were easily pleased nowadays!

In the crowded street he snapped up a cab under the very nose of a stout and much younger gentleman, who had already assumed it to be his own. His route lay through Pall Mall, and at the corner, instead of going through the Green Park, the cabman turned to drive up St. James's Street. Old Jolyon put his hand through the trap (he could not bear being taken out of his way); in turning, however, he found himself opposite the 'Hotch Potch,' and the yearning that had been secretly with him the whole evening prevailed. He called to the driver to stop. He would go in and ask if Jo still belonged there.

He went in. The hall looked exactly as it did when he used to dine there with Jack Herring, and they had the best cook in London; and he looked round with the shrewd, straight glance that had caused him all his life to be better served than most men.

"Mr. Jolyon Forsyte still a member here?"

"Yes, sir; in the Club now, sir. What name?"

Old Jolyon was taken aback.

"His father," he said.

And having spoken, he took his stand, back to the fireplace.

Young Jolyon, on the point of leaving the Club, had put on his hat, and was in the act of crossing the hall, as the porter met him. He was no longer young, with hair going grey, and face – a narrower replica of his father's, with the same large drooping moustache – decidedly worn. He turned pale. This meeting was terrible after all those years, for nothing in the world was so terrible as a scene. They met and crossed hands without a word. Then, with a quaver in his voice, the father said:

"How are you, my boy?"

The son answered:

"How are you, Dad?"

Old Jolyon's hand trembled in its thin lavender glove.

"If you're going my way," he said, "I can give you a lift."

And as though in the habit of taking each other home every night they went out and stepped into the cab.

To old Jolyon it seemed that his son had grown. 'More of a man altogether,' was his comment. Over the natural amiability of that son's face had come a rather sardonic mask, as though he had found in the circumstances of his life the necessity for armour. The features were certainly those of

a Forsyte, but the expression was more the introspective look of a student or philosopher. He had no doubt been obliged to look into himself a good deal in the course of those fifteen years.

To young Jolyon the first sight of his father was undoubtedly a shock – he looked so worn and old. But in the cab he seemed hardly to have changed, still having the calm look so well remembered, still being upright and keen-eyed.

“You look well, Dad.”

“Middling,” old Jolyon answered.

He was the prey of an anxiety that he found he must put into words. Having got his son back like this, he felt he must know what was his financial position.

“Jo,” he said, “I should like to hear what sort of water you’re in. I suppose you’re in debt?”

He put it this way that his son might find it easier to confess.

Young Jolyon answered in his ironical voice:

“No! I’m not in debt!”

Old Jolyon saw that he was angry, and touched his hand. He had run a risk. It was worth it, however, and Jo had never been sulky with him. They drove on, without speaking again, to Stanhope Gate. Old Jolyon invited him in, but young Jolyon shook his head.

“June’s not here,” said his father hastily: “went of to-day on a visit. I suppose you know that she’s engaged to be married?”

“Already?” murmured young Jolyon’.

Old Jolyon stepped out, and, in paying the cab fare, for the first time in his life gave the driver a sovereign in mistake for a shilling.

Placing the coin in his mouth, the cabman whipped his horse secretly on the underneath and hurried away.

Old Jolyon turned the key softly in the lock, pushed open the door, and beckoned. His son saw him gravely hanging up his coat, with an expression on his face like that of a boy who intends to steal cherries.

The door of the dining-room was open, the gas turned low; a spirit-urn hissed on a tea-tray, and close to it a cynical looking cat had fallen asleep on the dining-table. Old Jolyon ‘shoo’d’ her off at once. The incident was a relief to his feelings; he rattled his opera hat behind the animal.

“She’s got fleas,” he said, following her out of the room. Through the door in the hall leading to the basement he called “Hssst!” several times, as though assisting the cat’s departure, till by some strange coincidence the butler appeared below.

“You can go to bed, Parfitt,” said old Jolyon. “I will lock up and put out.”

When he again entered the dining-room the cat unfortunately preceded him, with her tail in the air, proclaiming that she had seen through this manœuvre for suppressing the butler from the first...

A fatality had dogged old Jolyon’s domestic stratagems all his life.

Young Jolyon could not help smiling. He was very well versed in irony, and everything that evening seemed to him ironical. The episode of the cat; the announcement of his own daughter’s engagement. So he had no more part or parcel in her than he had in the Puss! And the poetical justice of this appealed to him.

“What is June like now?” he asked.

“She’s a little thing,” returned old Jolyon; “they say she’s like me, but that’s their folly. She’s more like your mother – the same eyes and hair.”

“Ah! and she is pretty?”

Old Jolyon was too much of a Forsyte to praise anything freely; especially anything for which he had a genuine admiration.

“Not bad looking – a regular Forsyte chin. It’ll be lonely here when she’s gone, Jo.”

The look on his face again gave young Jolyon the shock he had felt on first seeing his father.

“What will you do with yourself, Dad? I suppose she’s wrapped up in him?”

“Do with myself?” repeated old Jolyon with an angry break in his voice. “It’ll be miserable work living here alone. I don’t know how it’s to end. I wish to goodness...” He checked himself, and added: “The question is, what had I better do with this house?”

Young Jolyon looked round the room. It was peculiarly vast and dreary, decorated with the enormous pictures of still life that he remembered as a boy – sleeping dogs with their noses resting on bunches of carrots, together with onions and grapes lying side by side in mild surprise. The house was a white elephant, but he could not conceive of his father living in a smaller place; and all the more did it all seem ironical.

In his great chair with the book-rest sat old Jolyon, the figurehead of his family and class and creed, with his white head and dome-like forehead, the representative of moderation, and order, and love of property. As lonely an old man as there was in London.

There he sat in the gloomy comfort of the room, a puppet in the power of great forces that cared nothing for family or class or creed, but moved, machine-like, with dread processes to inscrutable ends. This was how it struck young Jolyon, who had the impersonal eye.

The poor old Dad! So this was the end, the purpose to which he had lived with such magnificent moderation! To be lonely, and grow older and older, yearning for a soul to speak to!

In his turn old Jolyon looked back at his son. He wanted to talk about many things that he had been unable to talk about all these years. It had been impossible to seriously confide in June his conviction that property in the Soho quarter would go up in value; his uneasiness about that tremendous silence of Pippin, the superintendent of the New Colliery Company, of which he had so long been chairman; his disgust at the steady fall in American Golgothas, or even to discuss how, by some sort of settlement, he could best avoid the payment of those death duties which would follow his decease. Under the influence, however, of a cup of tea, which he seemed to stir indefinitely, he began to speak at last. A new vista of life was thus opened up, a promised land of talk, where he could find a harbour against the waves of anticipation and regret; where he could soothe his soul with the opium of devising how to round off his property and make eternal the only part of him that was to remain alive.

Young Jolyon was a good listener; it was his great quality. He kept his eyes fixed on his father’s face, putting a question now and then.

The clock struck one before old Jolyon had finished, and at the sound of its striking his principles came back. He took out his watch with a look of surprise:

“I must go to bed, Jo,” he said.

Young Jolyon rose and held out his hand to help his father up. The old face looked worn and hollow again; the eyes were steadily averted.

“Good-bye, my boy; take care of yourself.”

A moment passed, and young Jolyon, turning on his heel, marched out at the door. He could hardly see; his smile quavered. Never in all the fifteen years since he had first found out that life was no simple business, had he found it so singularly complicated.

CHAPTER III – DINNER AT SWITHIN’S

In Swithin’s orange and light-blue dining-room, facing the Park, the round table was laid for twelve.

A cut-glass chandelier filled with lighted candles hung like a giant stalactite above its centre, radiating over large gilt-framed mirrors, slabs of marble on the tops of side-tables, and heavy gold chairs with crewel worked seats. Everything betokened that love of beauty so deeply implanted in each family which has had its own way to make into Society, out of the more vulgar heart of Nature. Swithin had indeed an impatience of simplicity, a love of ormolu, which had always stamped him amongst his associates as a man of great, if somewhat luxurious taste; and out of the knowledge that no one could possibly enter his rooms without perceiving him to be a man of wealth, he had derived a solid and prolonged happiness such as perhaps no other circumstance in life had afforded him.

Since his retirement from land agency, a profession deplorable in his estimation, especially as to its auctioneering department, he had abandoned himself to naturally aristocratic tastes.

The perfect luxury of his latter days had embedded him like a fly in sugar; and his mind, where very little took place from morning till night, was the junction of two curiously opposite emotions, a lingering and sturdy satisfaction that he had made his own way and his own fortune, and a sense that a man of his distinction should never have been allowed to soil his mind with work.

He stood at the sideboard in a white waistcoat with large gold and onyx buttons, watching his valet screw the necks of three champagne bottles deeper into ice-pails. Between the points of his stand-up collar, which – though it hurt him to move – he would on no account have had altered, the pale flesh of his under chin remained immovable. His eyes roved from bottle to bottle. He was debating, and he argued like this: Jolyon drinks a glass, perhaps two, he’s so careful of himself. James, he can’t take his wine nowadays. Nicholas – Fanny and he would swill water he shouldn’t wonder! Soames didn’t count; these young nephews – Soames was thirty-one – couldn’t drink! But Bosinney?

Encountering in the name of this stranger something outside the range of his philosophy, Swithin paused. A misgiving arose within him! It was impossible to tell! June was only a girl, in love too! Emily (Mrs. James) liked a good glass of champagne. It was too dry for Juley, poor old soul, she had no palate. As to Hatty Chessman! The thought of this old friend caused a cloud of thought to obscure the perfect glassiness of his eyes: He shouldn’t wonder if she drank half a bottle!

But in thinking of his remaining guest, an expression like that of a cat who is just going to purr stole over his old face: Mrs. Soames! She mightn’t take much, but she would appreciate what she drank; it was a pleasure to give her good wine! A pretty woman – and sympathetic to him!

The thought of her was like champagne itself! A pleasure to give a good wine to a young woman who looked so well, who knew how to dress, with charming manners, quite distinguished – a pleasure to entertain her. Between the points of his collar he gave his head the first small, painful oscillation of the evening.

“Adolf!” he said. “Put in another bottle.”

He himself might drink a good deal, for, thanks to that prescription of Blight’s, he found himself extremely well, and he had been careful to take no lunch. He had not felt so well for weeks. Puffing out his lower lip, he gave his last instructions:

“Adolf, the least touch of the West India when you come to the ham.”

Passing into the anteroom, he sat down on the edge of a chair, with his knees apart; and his tall, bulky form was wrapped at once in an expectant, strange, primeval immobility. He was ready to rise at a moment’s notice. He had not given a dinner-party for months. This dinner in honour of June’s engagement had seemed a bore at first (among Forsytes the custom of solemnizing engagements by feasts was religiously observed), but the labours of sending invitations and ordering the repast over, he felt pleasantly stimulated.

And thus sitting, a watch in his hand, fat, and smooth, and golden, like a flattened globe of butter, he thought of nothing.

A long man, with side whiskers, who had once been in Swithin's service, but was now a greengrocer, entered and proclaimed:

"Mrs. Chessman, Mrs. Septimus Small!"

Two ladies advanced. The one in front, habited entirely in red, had large, settled patches of the same colour in her cheeks, and a hard, dashing eye. She walked at Swithin, holding out a hand cased in a long, primrose-coloured glove:

"Well! Swithin," she said, "I haven't seen you for ages. How are you? Why, my dear boy, how stout you're getting!"

The fixity of Swithin's eye alone betrayed emotion. A dumb and grumbling anger swelled his bosom. It was vulgar to be stout, to talk of being stout; he had a chest, nothing more. Turning to his sister, he grasped her hand, and said in a tone of command:

"Well, Juley."

Mrs. Septimus Small was the tallest of the four sisters; her good, round old face had gone a little sour; an innumerable pout clung all over it, as if it had been encased in an iron wire mask up to that evening, which, being suddenly removed, left little rolls of mutinous flesh all over her countenance. Even her eyes were pouting. It was thus that she recorded her permanent resentment at the loss of Septimus Small.

She had quite a reputation for saying the wrong thing, and, tenacious like all her breed, she would hold to it when she had said it, and add to it another wrong thing, and so on. With the decease of her husband the family tenacity, the family matter-of-factness, had gone sterile within her. A great talker, when allowed, she would converse without the faintest animation for hours together, relating, with epic monotony, the innumerable occasions on which Fortune had misused her; nor did she ever perceive that her hearers sympathized with Fortune, for her heart was kind.

Having sat, poor soul, long by the bedside of Small (a man of poor constitution), she had acquired, the habit, and there were countless subsequent occasions when she had sat immense periods of time to amuse sick people, children, and other helpless persons, and she could never divest herself of the feeling that the world was the most ungrateful place anybody could live in. Sunday after Sunday she sat at the feet of that extremely witty preacher, the Rev. Thomas Scoles, who exercised a great influence over her; but she succeeded in convincing everybody that even this was a misfortune. She had passed into a proverb in the family, and when anybody was observed to be peculiarly distressing, he was known as a regular 'Juley.' The habit of her mind would have killed anybody but a Forsyte at forty; but she was seventy-two, and had never looked better. And one felt that there were capacities for enjoyment about her which might yet come out. She owned three canaries, the cat Tommy, and half a parrot – in common with her sister Hester; – and these poor creatures (kept carefully out of Timothy's way – he was nervous about animals), unlike human beings, recognising that she could not help being blighted, attached themselves to her passionately.

She was sombrely magnificent this evening in black bombazine, with a mauve front cut in a shy triangle, and crowned with a black velvet ribbon round the base of her thin throat; black and mauve for evening wear was esteemed very chaste by nearly every Forsyte.

Pouting at Swithin, she said:

"Ann has been asking for you. You haven't been near us for an age!"

Swithin put his thumbs within the armholes of his waistcoat, and replied:

"Ann's getting very shaky; she ought to have a doctor!"

"Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Forsyte!"

Nicholas Forsyte, cocking his rectangular eyebrows, wore a smile. He had succeeded during the day in bringing to fruition a scheme for the employment of a tribe from Upper India in the gold-mines of Ceylon. A pet plan, carried at last in the teeth of great difficulties – he was justly pleased.

It would double the output of his mines, and, as he had often forcibly argued, all experience tended to show that a man must die; and whether he died of a miserable old age in his own country, or prematurely of damp in the bottom of a foreign mine, was surely of little consequence, provided that by a change in his mode of life he benefited the British Empire.

His ability was undoubted. Raising his broken nose towards his listener, he would add:

“For want of a few hundred of these fellows we haven’t paid a dividend for years, and look at the price of the shares. I can’t get ten shillings for them.”

He had been at Yarmouth, too, and had come back feeling that he had added at least ten years to his own life. He grasped Swithin’s hand, exclaiming in a jocular voice:

“Well, so here we are again!”

Mrs. Nicholas, an effete woman, smiled a smile of frightened jollity behind his back.

“Mr. and Mrs. James Forsyte! Mr. and Mrs. Soames Forsyte!”

Swithin drew his heels together, his deportment ever admirable.

“Well, James, well Emily! How are you, Soames? How do you do?”

His hand enclosed Irene’s, and his eyes swelled. She was a pretty woman – a little too pale, but her figure, her eyes, her teeth! Too good for that chap Soames!

The gods had given Irene dark brown eyes and golden hair, that strange combination, provocative of men’s glances, which is said to be the mark of a weak character. And the full, soft pallor of her neck and shoulders, above a gold-coloured frock, gave to her personality an alluring strangeness.

Soames stood behind, his eyes fastened on his wife’s neck. The hands of Swithin’s watch, which he still held open in his hand, had left eight behind; it was half an hour beyond his dinner-time – he had had no lunch – and a strange primeval impatience surged up within him.

“It’s not like Jolyon to be late!” he said to Irene, with uncontrollable vexation. “I suppose it’ll be June keeping him!”

“People in love are always late,” she answered.

Swithin stared at her; a dusky orange dyed his cheeks.

“They’ve no business to be. Some fashionable nonsense!”

And behind this outburst the inarticulate violence of primitive generations seemed to mutter and grumble.

“Tell me what you think of my new star, Uncle Swithin,” said Irene softly.

Among the lace in the bosom of her dress was shining a five-pointed star, made of eleven diamonds. Swithin looked at the star. He had a pretty taste in stones; no question could have been more sympathetically devised to distract his attention.

“Who gave you that?” he asked.

“Soames.”

There was no change in her face, but Swithin’s pale eyes bulged as though he might suddenly have been afflicted with insight.

“I dare say you’re dull at home,” he said. “Any day you like to come and dine with me, I’ll give you as good a bottle of wine as you’ll get in London.”

“Miss June Forsyte – Mr. Jolyon Forsyte!.. Mr. Boswainey!..”

Swithin moved his arm, and said in a rumbling voice:

“Dinner, now – dinner!”

He took in Irene, on the ground that he had not entertained her since she was a bride. June was the portion of Bosinney, who was placed between Irene and his fiancée. On the other side of June was James with Mrs. Nicholas, then old Jolyon with Mrs. James, Nicholas with Hatty Chessman, Soames with Mrs. Small, completing, the circle to Swithin again.

Family dinners of the Forsytes observe certain traditions. There are, for instance, no hors d’oeuvre. The reason for this is unknown. Theory among the younger members traces it to the

disgraceful price of oysters; it is more probably due to a desire to come to the point, to a good practical sense deciding at once that hors d'oeuvre are but poor things. The Jameses alone, unable to withstand a custom almost universal in Park Lane, are now and then unfaithful.

A silent, almost morose, inattention to each other succeeds to the subsidence into their seats, lasting till well into the first entree, but interspersed with remarks such as, "Tom's bad again; I can't tell what's the matter with him!" "I suppose Ann doesn't come down in the mornings?" – "What's the name of your doctor, Fanny?" "Stubbs?" "He's a quack!" – "Winifred? She's got too many children. Four, isn't it? She's as thin as a lath!" – "What d'you give for this sherry, Swithin? Too dry for me!"

With the second glass of champagne, a kind of hum makes itself heard, which, when divested of casual accessories and resolved into its primal element, is found to be James telling a story, and this goes on for a long time, encroaching sometimes even upon what must universally be recognised as the crowning point of a Forsyte feast – 'the saddle of mutton.'

No Forsyte has given a dinner without providing a saddle of mutton. There is something in its succulent solidity which makes it suitable to people 'of a certain position.' It is nourishing and tasty; the sort of thing a man remembers eating. It has a past and a future, like a deposit paid into a bank; and it is something that can be argued about.

Each branch of the family tenaciously held to a particular locality – old Jolyon swearing by Dartmoor, James by Welsh, Swithin by Southdown, Nicholas maintaining that people might sneer, but there was nothing like New Zealand! As for Roger, the 'original' of the brothers, he had been obliged to invent a locality of his own, and with an ingenuity worthy of a man who had devised a new profession for his sons, he had discovered a shop where they sold German; on being remonstrated with, he had proved his point by producing a butcher's bill, which showed that he paid more than any of the others. It was on this occasion that old Jolyon, turning to June, had said in one of his bursts of philosophy:

"You may depend upon it, they're a cranky lot, the Forsytes – and you'll find it out, as you grow older!"

Timothy alone held apart, for though he ate saddle of mutton heartily, he was, he said, afraid of it.

To anyone interested psychologically in Forsytes, this great saddle-of-mutton trait is of prime importance; not only does it illustrate their tenacity, both collectively and as individuals, but it marks them as belonging in fibre and instincts to that great class which believes in nourishment and flavour, and yields to no sentimental craving for beauty.

Younger members of the family indeed would have done without a joint altogether, preferring guinea-fowl, or lobster salad – something which appealed to the imagination, and had less nourishment – but these were females; or, if not, had been corrupted by their wives, or by mothers, who having been forced to eat saddle of mutton throughout their married lives, had passed a secret hostility towards it into the fibre of their sons.

The great saddle-of-mutton controversy at an end, a Tewkesbury ham commenced, together with the least touch of West Indian – Swithin was so long over this course that he caused a block in the progress of the dinner. To devote himself to it with better heart, he paused in his conversation.

From his seat by Mrs. Septimus Small Soames was watching. He had a reason of his own connected with a pet building scheme, for observing Bosinney. The architect might do for his purpose; he looked clever, as he sat leaning back in his chair, moodily making little ramparts with bread-crumbs. Soames noted his dress clothes to be well cut, but too small, as though made many years ago.

He saw him turn to Irene and say something and her face sparkle as he often saw it sparkle at other people – never at himself. He tried to catch what they were saying, but Aunt Juley was speaking.

Hadn't that always seemed very extraordinary to Soames? Only last Sunday dear Mr. Scole, had been so witty in his sermon, so sarcastic, "For what," he had said, "shall it profit a man if he gain his own soul, but lose all his property?" That, he had said, was the motto of the middle-class; now,

what had he meant by that? Of course, it might be what middle-class people believed – she didn't know; what did Soames think?

He answered abstractedly: "How should I know? Scoles is a humbug, though, isn't he?" For Bosinney was looking round the table, as if pointing out the peculiarities of the guests, and Soames wondered what he was saying. By her smile Irene was evidently agreeing with his remarks. She seemed always to agree with other people.

Her eyes were turned on himself; Soames dropped his glance at once. The smile had died off her lips.

A humbug? But what did Soames mean? If Mr. Scoles was a humbug, a clergyman – then anybody might be – it was frightful!

"Well, and so they are!" said Soames.

During Aunt Juley's momentary and horrified silence he caught some words of Irene's that sounded like: 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!'

But Swithin had finished his ham.

"Where do you go for your mushrooms?" he was saying to Irene in a voice like a courtier's; "you ought to go to Smileybob's – he'll give 'em you fresh. These little men, they won't take the trouble!"

Irene turned to answer him, and Soames saw Bosinney watching her and smiling to himself. A curious smile the fellow had. A half-simple arrangement, like a child who smiles when he is pleased. As for George's nickname – 'The Buccaneer' – he did not think much of that. And, seeing Bosinney turn to June, Soames smiled too, but sardonically – he did not like June, who was not looking too pleased.

This was not surprising, for she had just held the following conversation with James:

"I stayed on the river on my way home, Uncle James, and saw a beautiful site for a house."

James, a slow and thorough eater, stopped the process of mastication.

"Eh?" he said. "Now, where was that?"

"Close to Pangbourne."

James placed a piece of ham in his mouth, and June waited.

"I suppose you wouldn't know whether the land about there was freehold?" he asked at last. "You wouldn't know anything about the price of land about there?"

"Yes," said June; "I made inquiries." Her little resolute face under its copper crown was suspiciously eager and aglow.

James regarded her with the air of an inquisitor.

"What? You're not thinking of buying land!" he ejaculated, dropping his fork.

June was greatly encouraged by his interest. It had long been her pet plan that her uncles should benefit themselves and Bosinney by building country-houses.

"Of course not," she said. "I thought it would be such a splendid place for – you or – someone to build a country-house!"

James looked at her sideways, and placed a second piece of ham in his mouth...

"Land ought to be very dear about there," he said.

What June had taken for personal interest was only the impersonal excitement of every Forsyte who hears of something eligible in danger of passing into other hands. But she refused to see the disappearance of her chance, and continued to press her point.

"You ought to go into the country, Uncle James. I wish I had a lot of money, I wouldn't live another day in London."

James was stirred to the depths of his long thin figure; he had no idea his niece held such downright views.

"Why don't you go into the country?" repeated June; "it would do you a lot of good."

"Why?" began James in a fluster. "Buying land – what good d'you suppose I can do buying land, building houses? – I couldn't get four per cent. for my money!"

“What does that matter? You’d get fresh air.”

“Fresh air!” exclaimed James; “what should I do with fresh air,”

“I should have thought anybody liked to have fresh air,” said June scornfully.

James wiped his napkin all over his mouth.

“You don’t know the value of money,” he said, avoiding her eye.

“No! and I hope I never shall!” and, biting her lip with inexpressible mortification, poor June was silent.

Why were her own relations so rich, and Phil never knew where the money was coming from for to-morrow’s tobacco. Why couldn’t they do something for him? But they were so selfish. Why couldn’t they build country-houses? She had all that naive dogmatism which is so pathetic, and sometimes achieves such great results. Bosinney, to whom she turned in her discomfiture, was talking to Irene, and a chill fell on June’s spirit. Her eyes grew steady with anger, like old Jolyon’s when his will was crossed.

James, too, was much disturbed. He felt as though someone had threatened his right to invest his money at five per cent. Jolyon had spoiled her. None of his girls would have said such a thing. James had always been exceedingly liberal to his children, and the consciousness of this made him feel it all the more deeply. He trifled moodily with his strawberries, then, deluging them with cream, he ate them quickly; they, at all events, should not escape him.

No wonder he was upset. Engaged for fifty-four years (he had been admitted a solicitor on the earliest day sanctioned by the law) in arranging mortgages, preserving investments at a dead level of high and safe interest, conducting negotiations on the principle of securing the utmost possible out of other people compatible with safety to his clients and himself, in calculations as to the exact pecuniary possibilities of all the relations of life, he had come at last to think purely in terms of money. Money was now his light, his medium for seeing, that without which he was really unable to see, really not cognisant of phenomena; and to have this thing, “I hope I shall never know the value of money!” said to his face, saddened and exasperated him. He knew it to be nonsense, or it would have frightened him. What was the world coming to! Suddenly recollecting the story of young Jolyon, however, he felt a little comforted, for what could you expect with a father like that! This turned his thoughts into a channel still less pleasant. What was all this talk about Soames and Irene?

As in all self-respecting families, an emporium had been established where family secrets were bartered, and family stock priced. It was known on Forsyte ‘Change that Irene regretted her marriage. Her regret was disapproved of. She ought to have known her own mind; no dependable woman made these mistakes.

James reflected sourly that they had a nice house (rather small) in an excellent position, no children, and no money troubles. Soames was reserved about his affairs, but he must be getting a very warm man. He had a capital income from the business – for Soames, like his father, was a member of that well-known firm of solicitors, Forsyte, Bustard and Forsyte – and had always been very careful. He had done quite unusually well with some mortgages he had taken up, too – a little timely foreclosure – most lucky hits!

There was no reason why Irene should not be happy, yet they said she’d been asking for a separate room. He knew where that ended. It wasn’t as if Soames drank.

James looked at his daughter-in-law. That unseen glance of his was cold and dubious. Appeal and fear were in it, and a sense of personal grievance. Why should he be worried like this? It was very likely all nonsense; women were funny things! They exaggerated so, you didn’t know what to believe; and then, nobody told him anything, he had to find out everything for himself. Again he looked furtively at Irene, and across from her to Soames. The latter, listening to Aunt Juley, was looking up, under his brows in the direction of Bosinney.

‘He’s fond of her, I know,’ thought James. ‘Look at the way he’s always giving her things.’

And the extraordinary unreasonableness of her disaffection struck him with increased force.

It was a pity, too, she was a taking little thing, and he, James, would be really quite fond of her if she'd only let him. She had taken up lately with June; that was doing her no good, that was certainly doing her no good. She was getting to have opinions of her own. He didn't know what she wanted with anything of the sort. She'd a good home, and everything she could wish for. He felt that her friends ought to be chosen for her. To go on like this was dangerous.

June, indeed, with her habit of championing the unfortunate, had dragged from Irene a confession, and, in return, had preached the necessity of facing the evil, by separation, if need be. But in the face of these exhortations, Irene had kept a brooding silence, as though she found terrible the thought of this struggle carried through in cold blood. He would never give her up, she had said to June.

"Who cares?" June cried; "let him do what he likes – you've only to stick to it!" And she had not scrupled to say something of this sort at Timothy's; James, when he heard of it, had felt a natural indignation and horror.

What if Irene were to take it into her head to – he could hardly frame the thought – to leave Soames? But he felt this thought so unbearable that he at once put it away; the shady visions it conjured up, the sound of family tongues buzzing in his ears, the horror of the conspicuous happening so close to him, to one of his own children! Luckily, she had no money – a beggarly fifty pound a year! And he thought of the deceased Heron, who had had nothing to leave her, with contempt. Brooding over his glass, his long legs twisted under the table, he quite omitted to rise when the ladies left the room. He would have to speak to Soames – would have to put him on his guard; they could not go on like this, now that such a contingency had occurred to him. And he noticed with sour disfavour that June had left her wine-glasses full of wine.

'That little, thing's at the bottom of it all,' he mused; 'Irene'd never have thought of it herself.' James was a man of imagination.

The voice of Swithin roused him from his reverie.

"I gave four hundred pounds for it," he was saying. "Of course it's a regular work of art."

"Four hundred! H'm! that's a lot of money!" chimed in Nicholas.

The object alluded to was an elaborate group of statuary in Italian marble, which, placed upon a lofty stand (also of marble), diffused an atmosphere of culture throughout the room. The subsidiary figures, of which there were six, female, nude, and of highly ornate workmanship, were all pointing towards the central figure, also nude, and female, who was pointing at herself; and all this gave the observer a very pleasant sense of her extreme value. Aunt Juley, nearly opposite, had had the greatest difficulty in not looking at it all the evening.

Old Jolyon spoke; it was he who had started the discussion.

"Four hundred fiddlesticks! Don't tell me you gave four hundred for that?"

Between the points of his collar Swithin's chin made the second painful oscillatory movement of the evening.

"Four-hundred-pounds, of English money; not a farthing less. I don't regret it. It's not common English – it's genuine modern Italian!"

Soames raised the corner of his lip in a smile, and looked across at Bosinney. The architect was grinning behind the fumes of his cigarette. Now, indeed, he looked more like a buccaneer.

"There's a lot of work about it," remarked James hastily, who was really moved by the size of the group. "It'd sell well at Jobson's."

"The poor foreign dey-vil that made it," went on Swithin, "asked me five hundred – I gave him four. It's worth eight. Looked half-starved, poor dey-vil!"

"Ah!" chimed in Nicholas suddenly, "poor, seedy-lookin' chaps, these artists; it's a wonder to me how they live. Now, there's young Flageoletti, that Fanny and the girls are always hav'in' in, to play the fiddle; if he makes a hundred a year it's as much as ever he does!"

James shook his head. "Ah!" he said, "I don't know how they live!"

Old Jolyon had risen, and, cigar in mouth, went to inspect the group at close quarters.

“Wouldn’t have given two for it!” he pronounced at last.

Soames saw his father and Nicholas glance at each other anxiously; and, on the other side of Swithin, Bosinney, still shrouded in smoke.

‘I wonder what he thinks of it?’ thought Soames, who knew well enough that this group was hopelessly vieux jeu; hopelessly of the last generation. There was no longer any sale at Jobson’s for such works of art.

Swithin’s answer came at last. “You never knew anything about a statue. You’ve got your pictures, and that’s all!”

Old Jolyon walked back to his seat, puffing his cigar. It was not likely that he was going to be drawn into an argument with an obstinate beggar like Swithin, pig-headed as a mule, who had never known a statue from a – straw hat.

“Stucco!” was all he said.

It had long been physically impossible for Swithin to start; his fist came down on the table.

“Stucco! I should like to see anything you’ve got in your house half as good!”

And behind his speech seemed to sound again that rumbling violence of primitive generations.

It was James who saved the situation.

“Now, what do you say, Mr. Bosinney? You’re an architect; you ought to know all about statues and things!”

Every eye was turned upon Bosinney; all waited with a strange, suspicious look for his answer.

And Soames, speaking for the first time, asked:

“Yes, Bosinney, what do you say?”

Bosinney replied coolly:

“The work is a remarkable one.”

His words were addressed to Swithin, his eyes smiled slyly at old Jolyon; only Soames remained unsatisfied.

“Remarkable for what?”

“For its naivete”

The answer was followed by an impressive silence; Swithin alone was not sure whether a compliment was intended.

CHAPTER IV – PROJECTION OF THE HOUSE

Soames Forsyte walked out of his green-painted front door three days after the dinner at Swithin's, and looking back from across the Square, confirmed his impression that the house wanted painting.

He had left his wife sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room, her hands crossed in her lap, manifestly waiting for him to go out. This was not unusual. It happened, in fact, every day.

He could not understand what she found wrong with him. It was not as if he drank! Did he run into debt, or gamble, or swear; was he violent; were his friends rackety; did he stay out at night? On the contrary.

The profound, subdued aversion which he felt in his wife was a mystery to him, and a source of the most terrible irritation. That she had made a mistake, and did not love him, had tried to love him and could not love him, was obviously no reason.

He that could imagine so outlandish a cause for his wife's not getting on with him was certainly no Forsyte.

Soames was forced, therefore, to set the blame entirely down to his wife. He had never met a woman so capable of inspiring affection. They could not go anywhere without his seeing how all the men were attracted by her; their looks, manners, voices, betrayed it; her behaviour under this attention had been beyond reproach. That she was one of those women – not too common in the Anglo-Saxon race – born to be loved and to love, who when not loving are not living, had certainly never even occurred to him. Her power of attraction, he regarded as part of her value as his property; but it made him, indeed, suspect that she could give as well as receive; and she gave him nothing! 'Then why did she marry me?' was his continual thought. He had forgotten his courtship; that year and a half when he had besieged and lain in wait for her, devising schemes for her entertainment, giving her presents, proposing to her periodically, and keeping her other admirers away with his perpetual presence. He had forgotten the day when, adroitly taking advantage of an acute phase of her dislike to her home surroundings, he crowned his labours with success. If he remembered anything, it was the dainty capriciousness with which the gold-haired, dark-eyed girl had treated him. He certainly did not remember the look on her face – strange, passive, appealing – when suddenly one day she had yielded, and said that she would marry him.

It had been one of those real devoted wooings which books and people praise, when the lover is at length rewarded for hammering the iron till it is malleable, and all must be happy ever after as the wedding bells.

Soames walked eastwards, mousing doggedly along on the shady side.

The house wanted doing, up, unless he decided to move into the country, and build.

For the hundredth time that month he turned over this problem. There was no use in rushing into things! He was very comfortably off, with an increasing income getting on for three thousand a year; but his invested capital was not perhaps so large as his father believed – James had a tendency to expect that his children should be better off than they were. 'I can manage eight thousand easily enough,' he thought, 'without calling in either Robertson's or Nicholl's.'

He had stopped to look in at a picture shop, for Soames was an 'amateur' of pictures, and had a little-room in No. 62, Montpellier Square, full of canvases, stacked against the wall, which he had no room to hang. He brought them home with him on his way back from the City, generally after dark, and would enter this room on Sunday afternoons, to spend hours turning the pictures to the light, examining the marks on their backs, and occasionally making notes.

They were nearly all landscapes with figures in the foreground, a sign of some mysterious revolt against London, its tall houses, its interminable streets, where his life and the lives of his breed and

class were passed. Every now and then he would take one or two pictures away with him in a cab, and stop at Jobson's on his way into the City.

He rarely showed them to anyone; Irene, whose opinion he secretly respected and perhaps for that reason never solicited, had only been into the room on rare occasions, in discharge of some wifely duty. She was not asked to look at the pictures, and she never did. To Soames this was another grievance. He hated that pride of hers, and secretly dreaded it.

In the plate-glass window of the picture shop his image stood and looked at him.

His sleek hair under the brim of the tall hat had a sheen like the hat itself; his cheeks, pale and flat, the line of his clean-shaven lips, his firm chin with its greyish shaven tinge, and the buttoned strictness of his black cut-away coat, conveyed an appearance of reserve and secrecy, of imperturbable, enforced composure; but his eyes, cold, – grey, strained – looking, with a line in the brow between them, examined him wistfully, as if they knew of a secret weakness.

He noted the subjects of the pictures, the names of the painters, made a calculation of their values, but without the satisfaction he usually derived from this inward appraisal, and walked on.

No. 62 would do well enough for another year, if he decided to build! The times were good for building, money had not been so dear for years; and the site he had seen at Robin Hill, when he had gone down there in the spring to inspect the Nicholl mortgage – what could be better! Within twelve miles of Hyde Park Corner, the value of the land certain to go up, would always fetch more than he gave for it; so that a house, if built in really good style, was a first-class investment.

The notion of being the one member of his family with a country house weighed but little with him; for to a true Forsyte, sentiment, even the sentiment of social position, was a luxury only to be indulged in after his appetite for more material pleasure had been satisfied.

To get Irene out of London, away from opportunities of going about and seeing people, away from her friends and those who put ideas into her head! That was the thing! She was too thick with June! June disliked him. He returned the sentiment. They were of the same blood.

It would be everything to get Irene out of town. The house would please her, she would enjoy messing about with the decoration, she was very artistic!

The house must be in good style, something that would always be certain to command a price, something unique, like that last house of Parkes, which had a tower; but Parkes had himself said that his architect was ruinous. You never knew where you were with those fellows; if they had a name they ran you into no end of expense and were conceited into the bargain.

And a common architect was no good – the memory of Parkes' tower precluded the employment of a common architect:

This was why he had thought of Bosinney. Since the dinner at Swithin's he had made enquiries, the result of which had been meagre, but encouraging: "One of the new school."

"Clever?"

"As clever as you like – a bit – a bit up in the air!"

He had not been able to discover what houses Bosinney had built, nor what his charges were. The impression he gathered was that he would be able to make his own terms. The more he reflected on the idea, the more he liked it. It would be keeping the thing in the family, with Forsytes almost an instinct; and he would be able to get 'favoured-nation,' if not nominal terms – only fair, considering the chance to Bosinney of displaying his talents, for this house must be no common edifice.

Soames reflected complacently on the work it would be sure to bring the young man; for, like every Forsyte, he could be a thorough optimist when there was anything to be had out of it.

Bosinney's office was in Sloane Street, close at hand, so that he would be able to keep his eye continually on the plans.

Again, Irene would not be so likely to object to leave London if her greatest friend's lover were given the job. June's marriage might depend on it. Irene could not decently stand in the way of June's

marriage; she would never do that, he knew her too well. And June would be pleased; of this he saw the advantage.

Bosinney looked clever, but he had also – and – it was one of his great attractions – an air as if he did not quite know on which side his bread were buttered; he should be easy to deal with in money matters. Soames made this reflection in no defrauding spirit; it was the natural attitude of his mind – of the mind of any good business man – of all those thousands of good business men through whom he was threading his way up Ludgate Hill.

Thus he fulfilled the inscrutable laws of his great class – of human nature itself – when he reflected, with a sense of comfort, that Bosinney would be easy to deal with in money matters.

While he elbowed his way on, his eyes, which he usually kept fixed on the ground before his feet, were attracted upwards by the dome of St. Paul's. It had a peculiar fascination for him, that old dome, and not once, but twice or three times a week, would he halt in his daily pilgrimage to enter beneath and stop in the side aisles for five or ten minutes, scrutinizing the names and epitaphs on the monuments. The attraction for him of this great church was inexplicable, unless it enabled him to concentrate his thoughts on the business of the day. If any affair of particular moment, or demanding peculiar acuteness, was weighing on his mind, he invariably went in, to wander with mouse-like attention from epitaph to epitaph. Then retiring in the same noiseless way, he would hold steadily on up Cheapside, a thought more of dogged purpose in his gait, as though he had seen something which he had made up his mind to buy.

He went in this morning, but, instead of stealing from monument to monument, turned his eyes upwards to the columns and spacings of the walls, and remained motionless.

His uplifted face, with the awed and wistful look which faces take on themselves in church, was whitened to a chalky hue in the vast building. His gloved hands were clasped in front over the handle of his umbrella. He lifted them. Some sacred inspiration perhaps had come to him.

'Yes,' he thought, 'I must have room to hang my pictures.'

That evening, on his return from the City, he called at Bosinney's office. He found the architect in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a pipe, and ruling off lines on a plan. Soames refused a drink, and came at once to the point.

"If you've nothing better to do on Sunday, come down with me to Robin Hill, and give me your opinion on a building site."

"Are you going to build?"

"Perhaps," said Soames; "but don't speak of it. I just want your opinion."

"Quite so," said the architect.

Soames peered about the room.

"You're rather high up here," he remarked.

Any information he could gather about the nature and scope of Bosinney's business would be all to the good.

"It does well enough for me so far," answered the architect. "You're accustomed to the swells."

He knocked out his pipe, but replaced it empty between his teeth; it assisted him perhaps to carry on the conversation. Soames noted a hollow in each cheek, made as it were by suction.

"What do you pay for an office like this?" said he.

"Fifty too much," replied Bosinney.

This answer impressed Soames favourably.

"I suppose it is dear," he said. "I'll call for you – on Sunday about eleven."

The following Sunday therefore he called for Bosinney in a hansom, and drove him to the station. On arriving at Robin Hill, they found no cab, and started to walk the mile and a half to the site.

It was the 1st of August – a perfect day, with a burning sun and cloudless sky – and in the straight, narrow road leading up the hill their feet kicked up a yellow dust.

“Gravel soil,” remarked Soames, and sideways he glanced at the coat Bosinney wore. Into the side-pockets of this coat were thrust bundles of papers, and under one arm was carried a queer-looking stick. Soames noted these and other peculiarities.

No one but a clever man, or, indeed, a buccaneer, would have taken such liberties with his appearance; and though these eccentricities were revolting to Soames, he derived a certain satisfaction from them, as evidence of qualities by which he must inevitably profit. If the fellow could build houses, what did his clothes matter?

“I told you,” he said, “that I want this house to be a surprise, so don’t say anything about it. I never talk of my affairs until they’re carried through.”

Bosinney nodded.

“Let women into your plans,” pursued Soames, “and you never know where it’ll end.”

“Ah!” Said Bosinney, “women are the devil!”

This feeling had long been at the – bottom of Soames’s heart; he had never, however, put it into words.

“Oh!” he Muttered, “so you’re beginning to...” He stopped, but added, with an uncontrollable burst of spite: “June’s got a temper of her own – always had.”

“A temper’s not a bad thing in an angel.”

Soames had never called Irene an angel. He could not so have violated his best instincts, letting other people into the secret of her value, and giving himself away. He made no reply.

They had struck into a half-made road across a warren. A cart-track led at right-angles to a gravel pit, beyond which the chimneys of a cottage rose amongst a clump of trees at the border of a thick wood. Tussocks of feathery grass covered the rough surface of the ground, and out of these the larks soared into the haze of sunshine. On the far horizon, over a countless succession of fields and hedges, rose a line of downs.

Soames led till they had crossed to the far side, and there he stopped. It was the chosen site; but now that he was about to divulge the spot to another he had become uneasy.

“The agent lives in that cottage,” he said; “he’ll give us some lunch – we’d better have lunch before we go into this matter.”

He again took the lead to the cottage, where the agent, a tall man named Oliver, with a heavy face and grizzled beard, welcomed them. During lunch, which Soames hardly touched, he kept looking at Bosinney, and once or twice passed his silk handkerchief stealthily over his forehead. The meal came to an end at last, and Bosinney rose.

“I dare say you’ve got business to talk over,” he said; “I’ll just go and nose about a bit.” Without waiting for a reply he strolled out.

Soames was solicitor to this estate, and he spent nearly an hour in the agent’s company, looking at ground-plans and discussing the Nicholl and other mortgages; it was as it were by an afterthought that he brought up the question of the building site.

“Your people,” he said, “ought to come down in their price to me, considering that I shall be the first to build.”

Oliver shook his head.

The site you’ve fixed on, Sir, he said, “is the cheapest we’ve got. Sites at the top of the slope are dearer by a good bit.”

“Mind,” said Soames, “I’ve not decided; it’s quite possible I shan’t build at all. The ground rent’s very high.”

“Well, Mr. Forsyte, I shall be sorry if you go off, and I think you’ll make a mistake, Sir. There’s not a bit of land near London with such a view as this, nor one that’s cheaper, all things considered; we’ve only to advertise, to get a mob of people after it.”

They looked at each other. Their faces said very plainly: ‘I respect you as a man of business; and you can’t expect me to believe a word you say.’

Well, repeated Soames, "I haven't made up my mind; the thing will very likely go off!" With these words, taking up his umbrella, he put his chilly hand into the agent's, withdrew it without the faintest pressure, and went out into the sun.

He walked slowly back towards the site in deep thought. His instinct told him that what the agent had said was true. A cheap site. And the beauty of it was, that he knew the agent did not really think it cheap; so that his own intuitive knowledge was a victory over the agent's.

'Cheap or not, I mean to have it,' he thought.

The larks sprang up in front of his feet, the air was full of butterflies, a sweet fragrance rose from the wild grasses. The sappy scent of the bracken stole forth from the wood, where, hidden in the depths, pigeons were cooing, and from afar on the warm breeze, came the rhythmic chiming of church bells.

Soames walked with his eyes on the ground, his lips opening and closing as though in anticipation of a delicious morsel. But when he arrived at the site, Bosinney was nowhere to be seen. After waiting some little time, he crossed the warren in the direction of the slope. He would have shouted, but dreaded the sound of his voice.

The warren was as lonely as a prairie, its silence only broken by the rustle of rabbits bolting to their holes, and the song of the larks.

Soames, the pioneer-leader of the great Forsyte army advancing to the civilization of this wilderness, felt his spirit daunted by the loneliness, by the invisible singing, and the hot, sweet air. He had begun to retrace his steps when he at last caught sight of Bosinney.

The architect was sprawling under a large oak tree, whose trunk, with a huge spread of bough and foliage, ragged with age, stood on the verge of the rise.

Soames had to touch him on the shoulder before he looked up.

"Hallo! Forsyte," he said, "I've found the very place for your house! Look here!"

Soames stood and looked, then he said, coldly:

"You may be very clever, but this site will cost me half as much again."

"Hang the cost, man. Look at the view!"

Almost from their feet stretched ripe corn, dipping to a small dark copse beyond. A plain of fields and hedges spread to the distant grey-bluedowns. In a silver streak to the right could be seen the line of the river.

The sky was so blue, and the sun so bright, that an eternal summer seemed to reign over this prospect. Thistledown floated round them, enraptured by the serenity, of the ether. The heat danced over the corn, and, pervading all, was a soft, insensible hum, like the murmur of bright minutes holding revel between earth and heaven.

Soames looked. In spite of himself, something swelled in his breast. To live here in sight of all this, to be able to point it out to his friends, to talk of it, to possess it! His cheeks flushed. The warmth, the radiance, the glow, were sinking into his senses as, four years before, Irene's beauty had sunk into his senses and made him long for her. He stole a glance at Bosinney, whose eyes, the eyes of the coachman's 'half-tame leopard,' seemed running wild over the landscape. The sunlight had caught the promontories of the fellow's face, the bumpy cheekbones, the point of his chin, the vertical ridges above his brow; and Soames watched this rugged, enthusiastic, careless face with an unpleasant feeling.

A long, soft ripple of wind flowed over the corn, and brought a puff of warm air into their faces.

"I could build you a teaser here," said Bosinney, breaking the silence at last.

"I dare say," replied Soames, drily. "You haven't got to pay for it."

"For about eight thousand I could build you a palace."

Soames had become very pale – a struggle was going on within him. He dropped his eyes, and said stubbornly:

"I can't afford it."

And slowly, with his mousing walk, he led the way back to the first site.

They spent some time there going into particulars of the projected house, and then Soames returned to the agent's cottage.

He came out in about half an hour, and, joining Bosinney, started for the station.

“Well,” he said, hardly opening his lips, “I’ve taken that site of yours, after all.”

And again he was silent, confusedly debating how it was that this fellow, whom by habit he despised, should have overborne his own decision.

CHAPTER V – A FORSYTE MENAGE

Like the enlightened thousands of his class and generation in this great city of London, who no longer believe in red velvet chairs, and know that groups of modern Italian marble are ‘vieux jeu,’ Soames Forsyte inhabited a house which did what it could. It owned a copper door knocker of individual design, windows which had been altered to open outwards, hanging flower boxes filled with fuchsias, and at the back (a great feature) a little court tiled with jade-green tiles, and surrounded by pink hydrangeas in peacock-blue tubs. Here, under a parchment-coloured Japanese sunshade covering the whole end, inhabitants or visitors could be screened from the eyes of the curious while they drank tea and examined at their leisure the latest of Soames’s little silver boxes.

The inner decoration favoured the First Empire and William Morris. For its size, the house was commodious; there were countless nooks resembling birds’ nests, and little things made of silver were deposited like eggs.

In this general perfection two kinds of fastidiousness were at war. There lived here a mistress who would have dwelt daintily on a desert island; a master whose daintiness was, as it were, an investment, cultivated by the owner for his advancement, in accordance with the laws of competition. This competitive daintiness had caused Soames in his Marlborough days to be the first boy into white waistcoats in summer, and corduroy waistcoats in winter, had prevented him from ever appearing in public with his tie climbing up his collar, and induced him to dust his patent leather boots before a great multitude assembled on Speech Day to hear him recite Moliere.

Skin-like immaculateness had grown over Soames, as over many Londoners; impossible to conceive of him with a hair out of place, a tie deviating one-eighth of an inch from the perpendicular, a collar unglossed! He would not have gone without a bath for worlds – it was the fashion to take baths; and how bitter was his scorn of people who omitted them!

But Irene could be imagined, like some nymph, bathing in wayside streams, for the joy of the freshness and of seeing her own fair body.

In this conflict throughout the house the woman had gone to the wall. As in the struggle between Saxon and Celt still going on within the nation, the more impressionable and receptive temperament had had forced on it a conventional superstructure.

Thus the house had acquired a close resemblance to hundreds of other houses with the same high aspirations, having become: ‘That very charming little house of the Soames Forsytes, quite individual, my dear – really elegant.’

For Soames Forsyte – read James Peabody, Thomas Atkins, or Emmanuel Spagnoletti, the name in fact of any upper-middle class Englishman in London with any pretensions to taste; and though the decoration be different, the phrase is just.

On the evening of August 8, a week after the expedition to Robin Hill, in the dining-room of this house – ‘quite individual, my dear – really elegant’ – Soames and Irene were seated at dinner. A hot dinner on Sundays was a little distinguishing elegance common to this house and many others. Early in married life Soames had laid down the rule: ‘The servants must give us hot dinner on Sundays – they’ve nothing to do but play the concertina.’

The custom had produced no revolution. For – to Soames a rather deplorable sign – servants were devoted to Irene, who, in defiance of all safe tradition, appeared to recognise their right to a share in the weaknesses of human nature.

The happy pair were seated, not opposite each other, but rectangularly, at the handsome rosewood table; they dined without a cloth – a distinguishing elegance – and so far had not spoken a word.

Soames liked to talk during dinner about business, or what he had been buying, and so long as he talked Irene's silence did not distress him. This evening he had found it impossible to talk. The decision to build had been weighing on his mind all the week, and he had made up his mind to tell her.

His nervousness about this disclosure irritated him profoundly; she had no business to make him feel like that – a wife and a husband being one person. She had not looked at him once since they sat down; and he wondered what on earth she had been thinking about all the time. It was hard, when a man worked as he did, making money for her – yes, and with an ache in his heart – that she should sit there, looking – looking as if she saw the walls of the room closing in. It was enough to make a man get up and leave the table.

The light from the rose-shaded lamp fell on her neck and arms – Soames liked her to dine in a low dress, it gave him an inexpressible feeling of superiority to the majority of his acquaintance, whose wives were contented with their best high frocks or with tea-gowns, when they dined at home. Under that rosy light her amber-coloured hair and fair skin made strange contrast with her dark brown eyes.

Could a man own anything prettier than this dining-table with its deep tints, the starry, soft-petalled roses, the ruby-coloured glass, and quaint silver furnishing; could a man own anything prettier than the woman who sat at it? Gratitude was no virtue among Forsytes, who, competitive, and full of common-sense, had no occasion for it; and Soames only experienced a sense of exasperation amounting to pain, that he did not own her as it was his right to own her, that he could not, as by stretching out his hand to that rose, pluck her and sniff the very secrets of her heart.

Out of his other property, out of all the things he had collected, his silver, his pictures, his houses, his investments, he got a secret and intimate feeling; out of her he got none.

In this house of his there was writing on every wall. His business-like temperament protested against a mysterious warning that she was not made for him. He had married this woman, conquered her, made her his own, and it seemed to him contrary to the most fundamental of all laws, the law of possession, that he could do no more than own her body – if indeed he could do that, which he was beginning to doubt. If any one had asked him if he wanted to own her soul, the question would have seemed to him both ridiculous and sentimental. But he did so want, and the writing said he never would.

She was ever silent, passive, gracefully averse; as though terrified lest by word, motion, or sign she might lead him to believe that she was fond of him; and he asked himself: Must I always go on like this?

Like most novel readers of his generation (and Soames was a great novel reader), literature coloured his view of life; and he had imbibed the belief that it was only a question of time.

In the end the husband always gained the affection of his wife. Even in those cases – a class of book he was not very fond of – which ended in tragedy, the wife always died with poignant regrets on her lips, or if it were the husband who died – unpleasant thought – threw herself on his body in an agony of remorse.

He often took Irene to the theatre, instinctively choosing the modern Society Plays with the modern Society conjugal problem, so fortunately different from any conjugal problem in real life. He found that they too always ended in the same way, even when there was a lover in the case. While he was watching the play Soames often sympathized with the lover; but before he reached home again, driving with Irene in a hansom, he saw that this would not do, and he was glad the play had ended as it had. There was one class of husband that had just then come into fashion, the strong, rather rough, but extremely sound man, who was peculiarly successful at the end of the play; with this person Soames was really not in sympathy, and had it not been for his own position, would have expressed his disgust with the fellow. But he was so conscious of how vital to himself was the necessity for being a successful, even a 'strong,' husband, that he never spoke of a distaste born perhaps by the perverse processes of Nature out of a secret fund of brutality in himself.

But Irene's silence this evening was exceptional. He had never before seen such an expression on her face. And since it is always the unusual which alarms, Soames was alarmed. He ate his savoury, and hurried the maid as she swept off the crumbs with the silver sweeper. When she had left the room, he filled his glass with wine and said:

"Anybody been here this afternoon?"

"June."

"What did she want?" It was an axiom with the Forsytes that people did not go anywhere unless they wanted something. "Came to talk about her lover, I suppose?"

Irene made no reply.

"It looks to me," continued Soames, "as if she were sweeter on him than he is on her. She's always following him about."

Irene's eyes made him feel uncomfortable.

"You've no business to say such a thing!" she exclaimed.

"Why not? Anybody can see it."

"They cannot. And if they could, it's disgraceful to say so."

Soames's composure gave way.

"You're a pretty wife!" he said. But secretly he wondered at the heat of her reply; it was unlike her. "You're cracked about June! I can tell you one thing: now that she has the Buccaneer in tow, she doesn't care twopence about you, and, you'll find it out. But you won't see so much of her in future; we're going to live in the country."

He had been glad to get his news out under cover of this burst of irritation. He had expected a cry of dismay; the silence with which his pronouncement was received alarmed him.

"You don't seem interested," he was obliged to add.

"I knew it already."

He looked at her sharply.

"Who told you?"

"June."

"How did she know?"

Irene did not answer. Baffled and uncomfortable, he said:

"It's a fine thing for Bosinney, it'll be the making of him. I suppose she's told you all about it?"

"Yes."

There was another pause, and then Soames said:

"I suppose you don't want to, go?"

Irene made no reply.

"Well, I can't tell what you want. You never seem contented here."

"Have my wishes anything to do with it?"

She took the vase of roses and left the room. Soames remained seated. Was it for this that he had signed that contract? Was it for this that he was going to spend some ten thousand pounds? Bosinney's phrase came back to him: "Women are the devil!"

But presently he grew calmer. It might have, been worse. She might have flared up. He had expected something more than this. It was lucky, after all, that June had broken the ice for him. She must have wormed it out of Bosinney; he might have known she would.

He lighted his cigarette. After all, Irene had not made a scene! She would come round – that was the best of her; she was cold, but not sulky. And, puffing the cigarette smoke at a lady-bird on the shining table, he plunged into a reverie about the house. It was no good worrying; he would go and make it up presently. She would be sitting out there in the dark, under the Japanese sunshade, knitting. A beautiful, warm night...

In truth, June had come in that afternoon with shining eyes, and the words: "Soames is a brick! It's splendid for Phil – the very thing for him!"

Irene's face remaining dark and puzzled, she went on:

"Your new house at Robin Hill, of course. What? Don't you know?"

Irene did not know.

"Oh! then, I suppose I oughtn't to have told you!" Looking impatiently at her friend, she cried: "You look as if you didn't care. Don't you see, it's what I've been praying for – the very chance he's been wanting all this time. Now you'll see what he can do;" and thereupon she poured out the whole story.

Since her own engagement she had not seemed much interested in her friend's position; the hours she spent with Irene were given to confidences of her own; and at times, for all her affectionate pity, it was impossible to keep out of her smile a trace of compassionate contempt for the woman who had made such a mistake in her life – such a vast, ridiculous mistake.

"He's to have all the decorations as well – a free hand. It's perfect –" June broke into laughter, her little figure quivered gleefully; she raised her hand, and struck a blow at a muslin curtain. "Do you, know I even asked Uncle James..." But, with a sudden dislike to mentioning that incident, she stopped; and presently, finding her friend so unresponsive, went away. She looked back from the pavement, and Irene was still standing in the doorway. In response to her farewell wave, Irene put her hand to her brow, and, turning slowly, shut the door...

Soames went to the drawing-room presently, and peered at her through the window.

Out in the shadow of the Japanese sunshade she was sitting very still, the lace on her white shoulders stirring with the soft rise and fall of her bosom.

But about this silent creature sitting there so motionless, in the dark, there seemed a warmth, a hidden fervour of feeling, as if the whole of her being had been stirred, and some change were taking place in its very depths.

He stole back to the dining-room unnoticed.

CHAPTER VI – JAMES AT LARGE

It was not long before Soames's determination to build went the round of the family, and created the flutter that any decision connected with property should make among Forsytes.

It was not his fault, for he had been determined that no one should know. June, in the fulness of her heart, had told Mrs. Small, giving her leave only to tell Aunt Ann – she thought it would cheer her, the poor old sweet! for Aunt Ann had kept her room now for many days.

Mrs. Small told Aunt Ann at once, who, smiling as she lay back on her pillows, said in her distinct, trembling old voice:

“It's very nice for dear June; but I hope they will be careful – it's rather dangerous!”

When she was left alone again, a frown, like a cloud presaging a rainy morrow, crossed her face.

While she was lying there so many days the process of recharging her will went on all the time; it spread to her face, too, and tightening movements were always in action at the corners of her lips.

The maid Smither, who had been in her service since girlhood, and was spoken of as “Smither – a good girl – but so slow!” – the maid Smither performed every morning with extreme punctiliousness the crowning ceremony of that ancient toilet. Taking from the recesses of their pure white band-box those flat, grey curls, the insignia of personal dignity, she placed them securely in her mistress's hands, and turned her back.

And every day Aunts Juley and Hester were required to come and report on Timothy; what news there was of Nicholas; whether dear June had succeeded in getting Jolyon to shorten the engagement, now that Mr. Bosinney was building Soames a house; whether young Roger's wife was really – expecting; how the operation on Archie had succeeded; and what Swithin had done about that empty house in Wigmore Street, where the tenant had lost all his money and treated him so badly; above all, about Soames; was Irene still – still asking for a separate room? And every morning Smither was told: “I shall be coming down this afternoon, Smither, about two o'clock. I shall want your arm, after all these days in bed!”

After telling Aunt Ann, Mrs. Small had spoken of the house in the strictest confidence to Mrs. Nicholas, who in her turn had asked Winifred Dartie for confirmation, supposing, of course, that, being Soames's sister, she would know all about it. Through her it had in due course come round to the ears of James. He had been a good deal agitated.

“Nobody,” he said, “told him anything.” And, rather than go direct to Soames himself, of whose taciturnity he was afraid, he took his umbrella and went round to Timothy's.

He found Mrs. Septimus and Hester (who had been told – she was so safe, she found it tiring to talk) ready, and indeed eager, to discuss the news. It was very good of dear Soames, they thought, to employ Mr. Bosinney, but rather risky. What had George named him? ‘The Buccaneer’ How droll! But George was always droll! However, it would be all in the family they supposed they must really look upon Mr. Bosinney as belonging to the family, though it seemed strange.

James here broke in:

“Nobody knows anything about him. I don't see what Soames wants with a young man like that. I shouldn't be surprised if Irene had put her oar in. I shall speak to...”

“Soames,” interposed Aunt Juley, “told Mr. Bosinney that he didn't wish it mentioned. He wouldn't like it to be talked about, I'm sure, and if Timothy knew he would be very vexed, I...”

James put his hand behind his ear:

“What?” he said. “I'm getting very deaf. I suppose I don't hear people. Emily's got a bad toe. We shan't be able to start for Wales till the end of the month. There's always something!” And, having got what he wanted, he took his hat and went away.

It was a fine afternoon, and he walked across the Park towards Soames's, where he intended to dine, for Emily's toe kept her in bed, and Rachel and Cicely were on a visit to the country. He took

the slanting path from the Bayswater side of the Row to the Knightsbridge Gate, across a pasture of short, burnt grass, dotted with blackened sheep, strewn with seated couples and strange waifs; lying prone on their faces, like corpses on a field over which the wave of battle has rolled.

He walked rapidly, his head bent, looking neither to right nor, left. The appearance of this park, the centre of his own battle-field, where he had all his life been fighting, excited no thought or speculation in his mind. These corpses flung down, there, from out the press and turmoil of the struggle, these pairs of lovers sitting cheek by jowl for an hour of idle Elysium snatched from the monotony of their treadmill, awakened no fancies in his mind; he had outlived that kind of imagination; his nose, like the nose of a sheep, was fastened to the pastures on which he browsed.

One of his tenants had lately shown a disposition to be behind-hand in his rent, and it had become a grave question whether he had not better turn him out at once, and so run the risk of not re-letting before Christmas. Swithin had just been let in very badly, but it had served him right – he had held on too long.

He pondered this as he walked steadily, holding his umbrella carefully by the wood, just below the crook of the handle, so as to keep the ferule off the ground, and not fray the silk in the middle. And, with his thin, high shoulders stooped, his long legs moving with swift mechanical precision, this passage through the Park, where the sun shone with a clear flame on so much idleness – on so many human evidences of the remorseless battle of Property, raging beyond its ring – was like the flight of some land bird across the sea.

He felt a touch on the arm as he came out at Albert Gate.

It was Soames, who, crossing from the shady side of Piccadilly, where he had been walking home from the office, had suddenly appeared alongside.

“Your mother’s in bed,” said James; “I was, just coming to you, but I suppose I shall be in the way.”

The outward relations between James and his son were marked by a lack of sentiment peculiarly Forsytean, but for all that the two were by no means unattached. Perhaps they regarded one another as an investment; certainly they were solicitous of each other’s welfare, glad of each other’s company. They had never exchanged two words upon the more intimate problems of life, or revealed in each other’s presence the existence of any deep feeling.

Something beyond the power of word-analysis bound them together, something hidden deep in the fibre of nations and families – for blood, they say, is thicker than water – and neither of them was a cold-blooded man. Indeed, in James love of his children was now the prime motive of his existence. To have creatures who were parts of himself, to whom he might transmit the money he saved, was at the root of his saving; and, at seventy-five, what was left that could give him pleasure, but – saving? The kernel of life was in this saving for his children.

Than James Forsyte, notwithstanding all his ‘Jonah-isms,’ there was no saner man (if the leading symptom of sanity, as we are told, is self-preservation, though without doubt Timothy went too far) in all this London, of which he owned so much, and loved with such a dumb love, as the centre of his opportunities. He had the marvellous instinctive sanity of the middle class. In him – more than in Jolyon, with his masterful will and his moments of tenderness and philosophy – more than in Swithin, the martyr to crankiness – Nicholas, the sufferer from ability – and Roger, the victim of enterprise – beat the true pulse of compromise; of all the brothers he was least remarkable in mind and person, and for that reason more likely to live for ever.

To James, more than to any of the others, was “the family” significant and dear. There had always been something primitive and cosy in his attitude towards life; he loved the family hearth, he loved gossip, and he loved grumbling. All his decisions were formed of a cream which he skimmed off the family mind; and, through that family, off the minds of thousands of other families of similar fibre. Year after year, week after week, he went to Timothy’s, and in his brother’s front drawing-room – his legs twisted, his long white whiskers framing his clean-shaven mouth – would sit watching the

family pot simmer, the cream rising to the top; and he would go away sheltered, refreshed, comforted, with an indefinable sense of comfort.

Beneath the adamant of his self-preserving instinct there was much real softness in James; a visit to Timothy's was like an hour spent in the lap of a mother; and the deep craving he himself had for the protection of the family wing reacted in turn on his feelings towards his own children; it was a nightmare to him to think of them exposed to the treatment of the world, in money, health, or reputation. When his old friend John Street's son volunteered for special service, he shook his head querulously, and wondered what John Street was about to allow it; and when young Street was assagaied, he took it so much to heart that he made a point of calling everywhere with the special object of saying: He knew how it would be – he'd no patience with them!

When his son-in-law Dartie had that financial crisis, due to speculation in Oil Shares, James made himself ill worrying over it; the knell of all prosperity seemed to have sounded. It took him three months and a visit to Baden-Baden to get better; there was something terrible in the idea that but for his, James's, money, Dartie's name might have appeared in the Bankruptcy List.

Composed of a physiological mixture so sound that if he had an earache he thought he was dying, he regarded the occasional ailments of his wife and children as in the nature of personal grievances, special interventions of Providence for the purpose of destroying his peace of mind; but he did not believe at all in the ailments of people outside his own immediate family, affirming them in every case to be due to neglected liver.

His universal comment was: "What can they expect? I have it myself, if I'm not careful!"

When he went to Soames's that evening he felt that life was hard on him: There was Emily with a bad toe, and Rachel gadding about in the country; he got no sympathy from anybody; and Ann, she was ill – he did not believe she would last through the summer; he had called there three times now without her being able to see him! And this idea of Soames's, building a house, that would have to be looked into. As to the trouble with Irene, he didn't know what was to come of that – anything might come of it!

He entered 62, Montpellier Square with the fullest intentions of being miserable. It was already half-past seven, and Irene, dressed for dinner, was seated in the drawing-room. She was wearing her gold-coloured frock – for, having been displayed at a dinner-party, a soiree, and a dance, it was now to be worn at home – and she had adorned the bosom with a cascade of lace, on which James's eyes riveted themselves at once.

"Where do you get your things?" he said in an aggravated voice. "I never see Rachel and Cicely looking half so well. That rose-point, now – that's not real!"

Irene came close, to prove to him that he was in error.

And, in spite of himself, James felt the influence of her deference, of the faint seductive perfume exhaling from her. No self-respecting Forsyte surrendered at a blow; so he merely said: He didn't know – he expected she was spending a pretty penny on dress.

The gong sounded, and, putting her white arm within his, Irene took him into the dining-room. She seated him in Soames's usual place, round the corner on her left. The light fell softly there, so that he would not be worried by the gradual dying of the day; and she began to talk to him about himself.

Presently, over James came a change, like the mellowing that steals upon a fruit in the sun; a sense of being caressed, and praised, and petted, and all without the bestowal of a single caress or word of praise. He felt that what he was eating was agreeing with him; he could not get that feeling at home; he did not know when he had enjoyed a glass of champagne so much, and, on inquiring the brand and price, was surprised to find that it was one of which he had a large stock himself, but could never drink; he instantly formed the resolution to let his wine merchant know that he had been swindled.

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