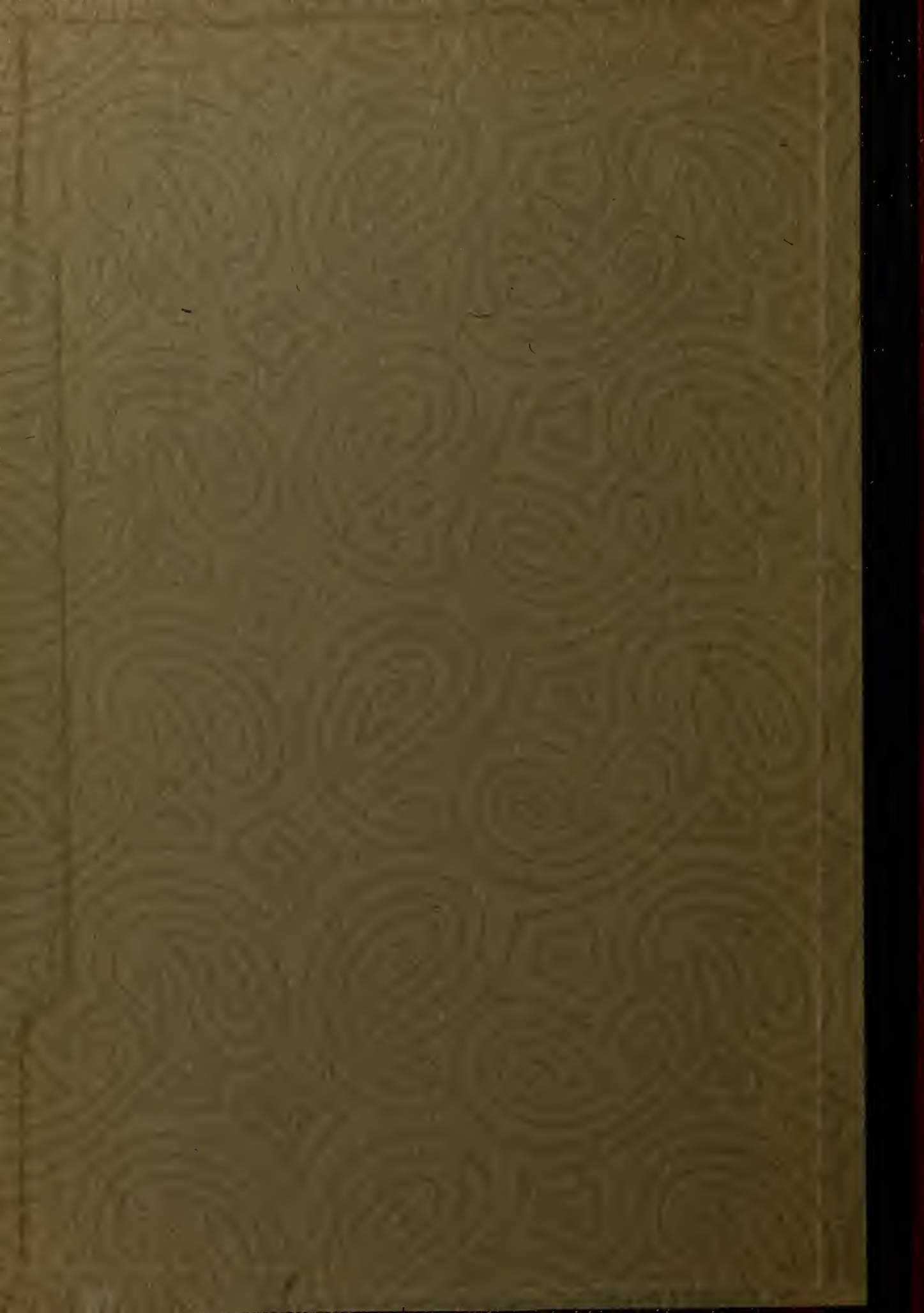


1931

(The) plays of John Galsworthy --

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
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Thesis

~~A STUDY OF~~ THE PLAYS OF JOHN GALSWORTHY--
DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

by

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submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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I. DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

John Galsworthy enjoys the unique distinction of being both an excellent novelist and an excellent dramatist. His reputation was made by a rapid succession of masterpieces. His preëminence in the field of the novel is unquestioned. His achievements in the field of the drama, most critics agree, accord him a place among the foremost playwrights of the age.

As early as 1909 Galsworthy outlined his dramatic program in an article which appeared in the Fortnightly Review, entitled "Some Platitudes Concerning Drama." The article was later included in a volume of essays called The Inn of Tranquillity. It is significant in a general way as a noteworthy discussion of the character and purposes of the modern drama. It is especially interesting as a revelation of Galsworthy's own aims and methods, for throughout his playwrighting career he has adhered to the principles set forth in the article, although many of his plays reveal that he has made advances in technique.

A. Realism

The dominant characteristic of Mr. Galsworthy's art is realism, or, as he prefers to term it, naturalism. Naturalistic drama, the playwright points out, is often termed photographic. Yet, "to be vital, to grip, such drama is in every respect as dependent on imagination, construction, selection, and elimination--the main laws of artistry--as ever was the romantic or rhapsodic play. The question of naturalistic technique will bear, indeed, much more study than has yet been given to it. The aim of the dramatist

employing it is obviously to create such an illusion of actual life passing on the stage as to compel the spectator to pass through an experience of his own, to think, and talk, and move with the people he sees thinking, talking, and moving in front of him. A false phrase, a single word out of tune or time, will destroy that illusion and spoil the surface as surely as a stone heaved into a still pool shatters the image there."* In the Preface to the "Manaton" edition of his plays, Galsworthy again mentions his preference for naturalism. "I can find this severe technique good not only for the dramatist, who is cleansed by a sort of self-inflicted purgatory, but for the audience, who, not getting the passions torn to tatters for them, must use their imagination more freely to obtain a full effect. There is a certain poignant value in suggestion, even on the stage, which has not received full recognition."

It should be understood, however, that it is only the technique of Galsworthy's plays that may be termed naturalistic. The true spirit and motivating force are distinctly idealistic. At heart Galsworthy is a reformer, and his plays reveal a didactic tendency. Didacticism might easily be a menace to his art, but, says Mr. A. E. Morgan, "his skill enables him to cope with the demon of didacticism, and with the utmost subtlety he succeeds in giving it ample scope and yet in keeping it within the bounds of realism."**

*"Some Platitudes Concerning Drama," included in The Inn of Tranquillity.

**A. E. Morgan, Tendencies of Modern English Drama, p. 121.

One device frequently employed in this cause is that of providing opportunities for speech-making. Strife is an excellent example wherein varying points of view are disclosed at length by old Anthony, the conservative capitalist, Roberts, leader of the strikers, Edgar, a company director, and Thomas, member of the workmen's committee. A board meeting and a gathering of the strikers give occasions for speeches. In The Mob, Stephen More rehearses the peroration of a speech he has prepared to give in the House, denouncing England's foreign policy; and again, near the end of the play, he addresses himself to the mob in bitter denunciation. In Justice there is the speech of Frome, attorney for young Falder, who in the trial scene reveals the dramatist's views on the subject of the treatment of criminals.

Mr. Galsworthy's preference for naturalism prompts him to abhor unrealistic theatricality. He seems deliberately to avoid big scenes, heightened emotional effects, and striking "curtains." In the "Platitudes" he says: "We want no more bastard drama; no more attempts to dress out the simple dignity of everyday life in the peacock's feathers of false lyricism; no more straw-stuffed heroes or heroines; no more rabbits and goldfish from the conjurer's pockets, nor any limelight. Let us have starlight, moonlight, sunlight, and the light of our own self-respect."

It is interesting to contrast this attitude with that of Sir Arthur Pinero, who says that dramatic talent is but the raw material of theatrical talent and that the great dramatist must produce the greatest emotional effect possible, "that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the one great

function of the theatre." Pinero himself is a master in the use of theatrical talent, while Galsworthy decries it. Galsworthy is concerned with life itself. He is willing to reveal the dramatic in life--in fact, he does so repeatedly with the most consummate skill--but he refuses to bolster up life situations for the sake of creating "the greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect" which Mr. Pinero insists is very important. Galsworthy even swings to the opposite extreme of employing restraint in the interest of utter fairness.

In comparing these two dramatists, Pinero and Galsworthy, Clayton Hamilton accords the honors to Pinero. "Pinero, the master-craftsman," he writes, "can make a great play out of next to nothing, as he did in the instance of The Thunderbolt; but Galsworthy can make a great play only when he has happened--as in the case of Justice--to hit upon a subject that is so inherently dramatic that it will carry itself without the aid of any notable exercise of dramatic talent." And then, a few pages later, apparently warning to his thesis, Hamilton states succinctly: "Mr. Galsworthy is not a great playwright. He may be a great man, he may be a great novelist, he may be a great writer; but he is not, on these accounts, to be regarded as a great dramatist."* Following that brave announcement, the critic derides that "Olympian impartiality of mind" and that "God-like lack of special sympathy in regard to any of his characters" as traits repugnant to the ordinary theatre-goer. He maintains that the spectator wishes

*Problems of the Playwright, p. 154.

to see a struggle in which his sympathies are clearly directed so that he may "root" for one side as at a ball-game.

Were Mr. Galsworthy's sympathies with the spectator, Clayton Hamilton tells us, he would renounce the fine impartiality displayed in Strife, "and would descend to the arena, to fight and bleed for the humanly and naturally partisan." But in doing so, would not Galsworthy indeed be taking a long step downward? Would he not be smothering his own broad sense of values and adopting the narrow, petty viewpoint of the least enlightened of the audience for the sake of sympathizing with the spectator? Has he not advanced a step beyond his fellow dramatists--Pinero and others of the "theatrical" school--in recognizing the virtues of both sides of a problem and in insisting that each be fairly represented?

Again, Mr. Hamilton affirms that a theatrical craftsman could easily increase the amount of emotional effect produced in Justice. Acts Two and Three, he says, are empty of surprise and suspense. They do not advance the narrative at all. Yet Hamilton admits that, as Galsworthy has written them, these are the two most interesting acts of the play. Is not this an admission that Galsworthy has something better to offer than mere theatricality?

The critic points out other opportunities for heightening the emotional effect in Justice. Calder might have been innocent and falsely convicted. Or, supposing him guilty, the motive for his crime might have been such as to arouse more sympathy. He might have stolen the money to save a dying mother from starvation, or he might have been persecuted by his employer. Galsworthy chooses

to have Falder steal the money so that he may elope with a married woman. The emotional effect might have been increased if the warden were a tyrant instead of a kindly sort of man. And then Mr. Hamilton concludes the discussion by saying that Justice is undeniably a great play, "despite the fact, or possibly because of the fact, that the treatment of the subject is deliberately un-theatrical."

Mr. Hamilton directs attention to Galsworthy's deliberate avoidance of so-called "big scenes." He points out that the audience expects such a scene in the final act of Justice, when Falder, just released from prison, meets Ruth and must learn the crushing story of her infidelity. But Galsworthy ushers both characters from the stage and the big scene is denied the audience, for the evident purpose of centering interest on the social theme rather than on the personal reactions of hero and heroine. In regard to The Fugitive, Hamilton is of the opinion that the playwright would have done far better to use the story as the basis of a novel. He believes that the most interesting scenes in the sad career of Clare Deamond are not presented and that the play suffers accordingly. Likewise, in The Eldest Son he sees a grave error in omitting the scène à faire from the last act of the play. Yet it is undeniable that the social significance of the theme is much greater than could possibly be the case if there were a stormy scene between Freda and young Studdenham.

Despite Mr. Hamilton's keen disapproval of the lack of theatrical effect in Galsworthy's plays, he utters two sentences

that seem to nullify his own criticisms. On page 148 in his Problems of the Playwright one finds the following: "It should always be remembered that theatrical efficiency is the one thing that Mr. Galsworthy has made up his mind to get along without. It must be admitted, also, that he gets along without it most surprisingly. So great is his dramatic talent that he seems to achieve more by leaving life alone than he could possibly achieve by arranging life in accordance with a technical pattern, however dexterous theatrically." In view of Mr. Galsworthy's own comments upon the difficulty of writing naturalistic drama, it may be said here that Mr. Hamilton scarcely does that artist justice when he speaks of his "leaving life alone." But aside from that inaccuracy of expression, there remains the big concession that Galsworthy accomplishes more without theatricality than he possibly could with it. And that concession, coming from Mr. Hamilton, is distinctly surprising and noteworthy.

Although Galsworthy is definitely opposed to the theatrical tendency, A. T. Morgan mentions two instances in which Galsworthy has planned "curtains" that produce the theatrical effect.* One comes at the end of Act One in The Eldest Son, when Freda tells Bill her secret.

BILL. Do you mean this? (She bows her head.)

FREDA. Father brought me up not to whine. Like the puppies when they hold them up by their tails. (With a sudden break in her voice) Oh! Bill!

BILL. Freda! Good God! By Jove! This is---

*Tendencies of Modern English Drama, p. 122.

Another example is seen at the end of Act One in The Skin Game, in the symbolic handshake of Jill and Rolf, representing two rival families.

JILL. Enemy?

ROLF. Yes, enemy.

JILL. Before the battle--let's shake hands.

(They grasp each other's hands in the center of the French window.)

B. Plots

Let us now consider plots. Galsworthy gives this definition: "A good plot is that sure edifice which slowly rises out of the interplay of circumstance on temperament, and temperament on circumstance, within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea."* He says that a human being is the best plot there is. A bad plot is characterized as a row of stakes with a character impaled on each. Thus strikingly Galsworthy impresses the fact that a plot must not be composed of mere facts or ideas, in which the characters are accessories to be manipulated like puppets. Such characters are created for the stake, and the stake gets them.

Galsworthy is true to his definition. His plots are not so conceived that the interest mainly depends on the ingenuity of the story. They are the unfolding of a situation, with its effects on character, all "within the atmosphere of an idea." Each play must have a theme, and every scene, every speech, must contribute something to the development of that theme.

*"Some Flatitudes Concerning Drama"

All of Galsworthy's great plays deal with some great social problem. The Silver Box, his first drama, shows us one law for the rich and another for the poor. Strife treats of the social war between capital and labor; it ends with wasted lives and a settlement exactly the same as one earlier proposed and rejected. The Pigeon considers the plight of the vagabonds and the poor. The Eldest Son is concerned with morality as applied to the rich and to the poor. The Fugitive presents the problem of woman's position in social life. In all of these plays, as well as in Justice, The Mob, and Loyalties, there is clash and conflict between superhuman forces.

It is probably true that Galsworthy's most effective plays are based on situations which are in themselves intensely dramatic. The Silver Box, Strife, Justice, The Pigeon, The Skin Game, and Loyalties are examples. In other plays, such as Joy, The Eldest Son, and The Mob, the situations are less dramatic. John Cunliffe is of the opinion that such plays as The Fugitive, The Mob, and The Show seem to indicate that Galsworthy is not at his best in dealing with special cases of faulty institutions or administration.* He is most successful when he uses the familiar facts of modern life to suggest their own lesson.

Climaxes do not occur in every Galsworthy play, but where they do occur, they come naturally and inevitably. There is a dramatic climax in The Fugitive. We are prepared for it; we see it coming from the first act; it is pitiful and heartrending. Likewise there are carefully planned climaxes in Justice and

*Modern English Playwrights, p. 108.

The Mob, although these are slightly different in that an element of sudden impulse or accident weakens the tragic force of the climax. Falder suddenly plunges to his death as he is being led away by the detective Wister. Stephen More is stabbed by a crazed member of the mob that forces its way into his home. Yet both these occurrences, sudden and unexpected though they may be, are nevertheless natural consequences of events that lead up to them.

In a study of tragic conclusions it is found that five of Galsworthy's plays end with the death of the principal character.* These are Justice, The Fugitive, The Mob, Loyalties, and Old English. In most cases there is a softening glow of tenderness and pity in the final scene. Falder and Nancy, both of whom commit suicide, are mourned over by grief-stricken women who had loved them while they lived. In The Mob there is an ironical touch in the student's picking up an abandoned Union Jack and laying it on the body of More; but the tragic close is brightened by the brief scene immediately following--dawn of a late spring day revealing a statue erected to the memory of More. When Clare Dedmond dies, gardenia blossoms fall into her lap; there is the sound of distant music playing the last notes of the old song, "This day a stag must die!", and the sound ascends to a higher octave, sweet and thin, "like a spirit passing"; a French waiter reverently crosses himself; and a woman kisses Clare upon the forehead. Even Sylvanus Heythorp, in Old English, though he has been something of a scamp, is visited by young Phyllis, who slips

*R. H. Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 184.

some lilies of the valley into his buttonhole and blows him a kiss, believing that "Guardy" is merely sleeping.

In some plays Galsworthy has made admirable use of dramatic looks at the conclusion of the final act. In The Silver Box, when the "high" and the "low" characters are together on the stage, there is the final humbly appealing gesture of Mrs. Jones, and when Barthwick hurries from the courtroom, she watches him go, all the sorrow and wrong of the play expressed in that look. John Anthony and David Roberts exchange tragic looks at the close of Strife, as do Nancy and de Levis towards the close of Loyalties.

The element of suspense provides the chief source of interest in some plays. In Justice we are kept in suspense awaiting the decision of the judge in the trial scene. Interest is well sustained in Loyalties while an effort is being made to discover the one responsible for the robbery. The Skin Game presents an exciting struggle between two rival families, and suspense figures very decidedly as honors vary. In The Eldest Son there is keen interest in the attitude of Sir William toward the affair between his son and Freda, and the element of suspense is heightened by a family discussion of his probable reaction. Escape, Galsworthy's last play, is another example of the author's skillful use of dramatic suspense, for here we are intensely interested in the fortunes of an escaped convict who has won our sympathy.

Galsworthy's plays present many interesting examples of parallelism and contrast. In his first play, The Silver Box, Jack Barthwick and Jim Jones are both found to be guilty of theft on the same evening. Barthwick steals a woman's bag; Jones steals

a silver cigarette box. Both men have been drinking and are irresponsible. There is contrast in their social positions: young Barthwick is the son of a wealthy member of Parliament; Jones is a disreputable loafer. Barthwick's theft is overlooked, and Jones is sentenced to one month's hard labor. The parallelism and contrast are carefully pointed out in the court scene near the end of Act Three. The magistrate addresses Jones:

MAGISTRATE. Your conduct has been most improper. You give the excuse that you were drunk when you stole the box. I tell you that is no excuse. If you choose to get drunk and break the law afterwards you must take the consequences. And let me tell you that men like you, who get drunk and give way to your spite or whatever it is that's in you, are--are--a nuisance to the community.

JACK. (Leaning from his seat) Dad! That's what you said to me!

Then, after the sentence has been given, the accused speaks. "Call this justice? What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse-- 'e took the purse but it's 'is money got 'im off--Justice!" And of course Jones speaks truly.

There is an echo of the double standard idea in The Eldest Son, which reveals two illicit love affairs. Sir William Cheshire sternly insists upon marriage in the case of Rose Taylor and Dunning, but he considers it impossible in the case of Freda Studdenham and his son Bill. Their social positions are at variance, and the moral code must not apply.

A Bit o' Love presents the parallel cases of Michael Strangway, the young curate who has lost his wife by desertion, and Jack Gremer, the villager who has lost his wife by death. There is a



fine dramatic touch in the curate's being called upon to console Cremer.

In Strife the parallelism is excellent.* Anthony, the capitalist leader, balances Roberts, leader of the workers. Enid, the daughter of Anthony, balances Annie, wife of Roberts. The directors balance the workers. Even the arguments of the leaders are carefully balanced. Anthony is fighting in the interests of Capital; Roberts makes a stand for Labor. Each has a personal reason. Anthony wishes to provide adequately for his daughter's comforts, while Roberts has a financial grievance against the company in the matter of an invention. There is parallelism again in the outcome--defeat for both leaders.

G. Action

Galsworthy defines for us dramatic action. "True dramatic action," he writes, "is what characters do, at once contrary, as it were, to expectation, and yet because they have already done other things. No dramatist should let his audience know what is coming; but neither should he suffer his characters to act without making his audience feel that those actions are in harmony with temperament, and arise from previous known actions, together with the temperaments and previous known actions of the other characters in the play. The dramatist who helps his characters to his plot, instead of hanging his plot to his characters, is guilty of cardinal sin."**

We note some cases where dramatic action reveals emotional

*Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 157.

**"Some Platitudes Concerning Drama."

tension. Stephen More, in a moment of crisis, grips a wine glass too tightly and it breaks into pieces in his hand. In like manner, Sir William Cheshire, upon hearing of his son's disgrace, crushes to pieces a small china cup. Michael Strangway tears apart the bird cage from which he had just released a lark, at a time when he is mightily disturbed over the departure of his wife.

Some dramatic action has the force of symbolism. Strangway's releasing the skylark is suggestive of his allowing his wife to go to her former lover. In The Eldest Son, the rehearsal of the play Caste is ironically symbolic of the situation involving Freda and Bill. In the same play, the introduction of two spaniel puppies provides further symbolism. Clare, in The Fugitive, lays the gardenia flowers against her face after she has taken poison, and the flowers are symbolic of that love of beauty which has been the cause of so much suffering. There is an excellent dramatic touch in The Pigeon, when Hoxton and Galway, about to leave Wellwyn's house, actually trip over the body of the inebriated Timson precisely at the moment when they are discussing the folly of "losing sight of the individual."

D. Characters

As a creator of character, Galsworthy is unsurpassed by any contemporary. It is chiefly his excellent character portrayals that explain his unique success in the field of the novel. He works with a sure touch. His people are real people who live for us as we watch the story unfold.

"Take care of character; action and dialogue will take care of themselves!" Galsworthy writes in his "Platitudes." "The perfect dramatist rounds up his characters and facts within the ringfence of a dominant idea which fulfils the craving of his spirit; having got them there, he suffers them to live their own lives."

It is to be observed that Galsworthy regularly employs commonplace characters. Sometimes they seem to be below the general level of human intellect and of human power. Falder is an outstanding example. He is the central figure in Justice and yet a weakling. The apparent absence of noble and gigantic characters of the usual dramatic hero type has led critics to question the force of Galsworthy's tragic appeal.

Allardyce Nicoll in his British Drama* treats this matter in an able way. He points out that the age of hero-worship seems to have passed by. Our terror is aroused by invincible forces rather than by powerful individuals. Thus it is that we have a Falder instead of a Macbeth. Judged by the standards of Grecian and Elizabethan art, Galsworthy's plays are not great tragedies. They do not have a single figure who rises to a loftier height than his fellows. But one should not attempt to judge the art of today by the standards of the past. Nicoll maintains that Galsworthy, despite his kindness of heart, possesses a genuine tragic firmness. "We do not feel pity for the fate of Falder so much as we feel awe in contemplating the mighty millstones of Justice, grinding exceeding small, ruthless and fatal in their

*P. 367.

silent power. The tragic atmosphere dominates the play; tears are useless and vain."

An analysis of the persons who appear in Galsworthy's plays, classified according to social standing, has been made by R. H. Coats.* He finds one duke, two other peers, three judges and magistrates, three members of Parliament, and four municipal personages. There are fourteen company directors and shareholders. There are seven clergymen (none higher than a dean), eleven army officers, and four characters from the navy and the air service. There are eight professional men. Housekeepers, landladies, and governesses number five; foreigners, seven. Twenty working people appear. He finds twelve unfortunates and four convicts. Twenty rustic characters are to be found, and about forty young people. Agents of the law total more than thirty, and there are about an equal number of servants.

Another classification groups together the conservatives and aristocrats, including Millerist, John Anthony, John How, General Canynge, Sir John Julian, Sir William Cheshire, and Sylvanus Heythorp. An opposing group is made up of rebels against the established order,--Hornblower, Stephen More, Jim Jones, David Roberts, and Bob Lemmy. Next come the victims of the social order--those who are weak and suffer the misery of injustice: Falder, Ruth Honeywill, Faith Bly, Clare Dedmond, Mrs. Roberts, and Mrs. Jones. Then there are the degenerates--Ferrand, Timson, Mr. and Mrs. Megan, all of whom appear in The Pigeon. Not the least interesting are those sympathetic, understanding souls who try to mitigate the

*John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 40-43.

harshness of life--the artist Wellwyn, Cokeson, Edgar and Enid Anthony.

Undoubtedly, Anthony and Roberts are Galsworthy's strongest characters; neither can be swayed from his set purpose. Wellwyn, the absurdly generous soul in The Pigeon, is one of the most delightful characters. Ferrand, the vagabond philosopher in the same play, is distinctly unique. Mrs. Jones, the meek, dutiful, self-effacing, patient wife in The Silver Box, is pathetically appealing. These few characters are among the most interesting that Galsworthy depicts for us.

F. Dialogue

"Good dialogue," we read in the "Flatitudes," "again is character, marshalled so as continually to stimulate interest or excitement. The reason good dialogue is seldom found in plays is merely that it is hard to write, for it requires not only a knowledge of what interests or excites, but such a feeling for character as brings misery to the dramatist's heart when his creations speak as they should not speak--ashes to his mouth when they say things for the sake of saying them--disgust when they are 'smart.'"

The two important functions of dialogue are (1) to unfold the plot and (2) to reveal character. Galsworthy's dialogue admirably fulfils these functions. There is a careful avoidance of superfluous chatter. Note the remarkable economy in this excerpt from Act One of The Pigeon.

ANN. (Sitting on the little stool, with her back to the fire, and making tea.) Daddy!

WELLYN. My dear?

ANN. You say you liked Professor Calway's lecture. Is it going to do you any good, that's the question?

WELLYN. I--I hope so, Ann.

ANN. I took you on purpose. Your charity's getting simply awful. Those two this morning cleared out all my housekeeping money.

WELLYN. Um! Um! I quite understand your feeling.

ANN. They both had your card, so I couldn't refuse--didn't know what you'd said to them. Why don't you make it a rule never to give your card to anyone except really decent people, and--picture dealers, of course.

WELLYN. My dear, I have--often.

ANN. Then why don't you keep it? It's a frightful habit. You are naughty, Daddy. One of these days you'll get yourself into most fearful complications.

WELLYN. My dear, when they--when they look at you?

ANN. You know the house wants all sorts of things. Why do you speak to them at all?

WELLYN. I don't--they speak to me. (He takes off his ulster and hangs it over the back of an arm-chair.)

ANN. They see you coming. Anybody can see you coming, Daddy. That's why you ought to be so careful. I shall make you wear a hard hat. Those squashy hats of yours are hopelessly inefficient.

WELLYN. (Gazing at his hat.) Calway wears one.

ANN. As if anyone would beg of Professor Calway.

WELLYN. Well--perhaps not. You know, Ann, I admire that fellow. Wonderful power of--of--theory! How a man can be so absolutely tidy in his mind! It's most exciting.

ANN. Has any one begged of you today?

WELLYN. (Doubtfully) No--no.

ANN. (After a long, severe look) Will you have rum in your tea?

WELLWYN. (Crestfallen) Yes, my dear, a good deal.

ANN. (Pouring out the rum, and handing him the glass) Well, who was it?

WELLWYN. He didn't beg of me. (Losing himself in recollection) Interesting old creature, Ann--real type. Old cabman.

ANN. Where?

WELLWYN. Just on the Embankment.

ANN. Of course! Daddy, you know the Embankment ones are always rotters.

WELLWYN. Yes, my dear; but this wasn't.

ANN. Did you give him your card?

WELLWYN. I--I--don't--

ANN. Did you, Daddy?

WELLWYN. I'm rather afraid I may have!

ANN. May have! It's simply immoral.

WELLWYN. Well, the old fellow was so awfully human, Ann. Besides, I didn't give him any money--hadn't got any.

ANN. Look here, Daddy! Did you ever ask anybody for anything? You know you never did, you'd starve first. So would anybody decent. Then, why won't you see that people who beg are rotters?

WELLWYN. But, my dear, we're not all the same. They wouldn't do it if it wasn't natural to them. One likes to be friendly. What's the use of being alive if one isn't?

ANN. Daddy, you're hopeless.

With the exception of four brief preliminary speeches, this is the beginning of the play. What an excellent insight into the character of Wellwyn! It shows his humanitarian tendencies,

introduces us to his peculiar habit of passing out cards, and prepares us for the arrival of the degenerates. Likewise we perceive Ann's attitude to be that of the average person who is neither hard-hearted nor lavish, merely sensible. And there is an excellent bit about Professor Galway, who represents the scientific attitude toward the problem of the play. "Wonderful power of theory! How a man can be so absolutely tidy in his mind!" We have encountered tidy minds like his, and we revel in the phrase. The entire first act of this play is remarkable for dialogue. Barrett W. Clark* believes that Galsworthy never wrote a better act. There is not the usual exposition; the characters evolve through the medium of dialogue that is (borrowing a phrase from the "Platitudes") "spiritual action." There is not an unnecessary syllable.

"The art of writing true dramatic dialogue," Galsworthy further tells us, "is an austere art, denying itself all license, grudging every sentence devoted to the mere machinery of the play, suppressing all jokes and epigrams severed from character, relying for fun and pathos on the fun and tears of life. From start to finish good dialogue is hand-made, like good lace; clear, of fine texture, furthering with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated."

Act One of The Fugitive well illustrates the "austere art." Here are some speeches of the "thrust and parry" type, part of the altercation between the incompatible husband and wife:

*A Study of the Modern Drama, chapter on English Drama.

CLARE. Is it worth while to rag me? I know I've behaved badly, but I couldn't help it, really!

GEORGE. Couldn't help behaving like a shop-girl? My God! You were brought up as well as I was.

CLARE. Alas!

GEORGE. To let everybody see that we don't get on--there's only one word for it--Disgusting!

CLARE. I know.

GEORGE. Then why do you do it? I've always kept my end up. Why in heaven's name do you behave in this crazy way?

CLARE. I'm sorry.

GEORGE. (With intense feeling) You like making a fool of me!

CLARE. No-- Really! Only--I must break out sometimes.

GEORGE. There are things one does not do.

CLARE. I came in because I was sorry.

GEORGE. And at once began to do it again! It seems to me you delight in rows.

CLARE. You'd miss your--reconciliations.

GEORGE. For God's sake, Clare, drop cynicism!

CLARE. And truth?

GEORGE. You are my wife, I suppose.

CLARE. And they twain shall be one--spirit.

GEORGE. Don't talk wild nonsense!

* * * *

CLARE. Let me go! You'd be much happier with any other woman.

GEORGE. Clare!

CLARE. I believe--I'm sure I could earn my living. Quite serious.

GEORGE. Are you mad?

CLARE. It has been done.

GEORGE. It will never be done by you--understand that!

CLARE. It really is time we parted. I'd go clean out of your life. I don't want your support unless I'm giving you something for your money.

GEORGE. Once for all, I don't mean to allow you to make fools of us both.

CLARE. But if we are already! Look at us. We go on, and on. We're a spectacle.

GEORGE. That's not my opinion; nor the opinion of anyone, so long as you behave yourself.

CLARE. That is--behave as you think right.

GEORGE. Clare, you're pretty riling.

CLARE. I don't want to be horrid. But I am in earnest this time.

GEORGE. So am I.

(Clare turns to the curtained door.)

GEORGE. Look here! I'm sorry. God knows I don't want to be a brute. I know you're not happy.

CLARE. And you--are you happy?

GEORGE. I don't say I am. But why can't we be?

CLARE. I see no reason, except that you are you, and I am I.

In the matter of technique we have considered realism, plots, action, characters, and dialogue. We shall now direct our attention to a study of social values to be found in Galsworthy's dramas.

II. SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Before discussing the social significance of Galsworthy's plays, it is well to consider the responsibility of the dramatist in pointing a moral. Turning to the "Platitudes" for enlightenment on this topic, we find that "A drama must be shaped so as to have a spine of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral noignantly to the light of day."

Galsworthy outlines three courses open to the serious dramatist in this matter of the moral. The first is to set before the public that which it wishes to have set before it, "the triumph at all costs of a supposed immediate ethical good over a supposed immediate ethical evil." This course is the most popular and the most successful. The second is to set before the public those theories of life in which the dramatist himself believes. This is the course of Bernard Shaw. The third course is "to set before the public no cut-and-dried codes, but the phenomena of life and character, selected and combined, but not distorted, by the dramatist's outlook, set down without fear, favor, or prejudice, leaving the public to draw such poor moral as nature may afford." This is the method of Galsworthy. It is the most difficult of the three, for it requires a certain detachment, sympathy with things for their own sake, and a far view for no immediately practical result.

By nature, education, and circumstances Galsworthy is peculiarly fitted for the task outlined. He is an English aristocrat in birth and breeding. He was born in Surrey and spent five years at Harrow and three at Oxford. After graduation, in 1890 he entered the profession of law, which he disliked thoroughly. Fortunately for his peace of mind as well as for modern English drama, his financial circumstances were such that he was free to forsake law; and during the succeeding years he traveled extensively, visiting many remote places.

It is rather curious that Galsworthy writes so little of foreign countries. Usually a writer who has enjoyed such opportunities for travel draws generously upon his travel material. But Galsworthy writes almost exclusively of England and things English. He had the advantage, however, of viewing his native country from abroad, seeing it, perhaps, with the eyes of a foreigner, so that his experience has doubtless contributed a certain broadminded non-partisanship which permits him to see life steadily and to see it whole.

Galsworthy is endowed with a native kindness of heart which accounts for a peculiar sensitiveness to the sufferings of struggling humanity. His active sympathy for the unfortunate and down-trodden is a motivating force in many of his plays. He is sincerely and deeply interested in his fellow human beings. He has a great sense of pity for Clare Redmond, Mrs. Jones, and Falder-- poor, helpless creatures who are too weak to withstand the harshness of life. Yet he is too great an artist to sentimentalize. He

merely presents them in their true circumstances, allowing us to pity them as our emotions may dictate. Unlike Dickens, he does not insist upon tears. He has the sternness of the tragic artist, and forces us to watch as the great social forces roll on in their inevitable way, crushing beneath their mighty wheels the chosen victims of the hour.

At heart Galsworthy is a reformer. Reformers are prone to shape cases to fit their prejudices. Their aim is didactic, and in order to assure results, they usually construct a one-sided picture that gains form and color as their imaginative genius is brought into play. Galsworthy is a unique reformer in that he is strictly impartial in setting forth problems. He scorns the distorted viewpoint that says: "This side is entirely right and that side entirely wrong." As a matter of fact, there are often more than two sides to be considered. Moreover, there are usually several things to be said in favor of each side. Decision depends upon a careful weighing of the ideas presented and a nice discrimination between the good and the less good, the just and the less just, perhaps even between the mistaken and the less mistaken. Life is not a simple thing: neither are its problems. Human beings are possessed of widely varying and highly complicated thoughts, emotions, motives, and prejudices, all of which may be still further varied and complicated by the circumstances of fortune and environment. It is impossible to draw up a code of action which may serve for all, nor is it possible to set forth a group of standards by which all may be judged. There is a crying



need for a careful examination of individual cases and for a judgment or recommendation in terms of the complicating factors. Even courts of justice must consider the individual as an individual, not as one criminal in a mass of criminals. It is something of this idea that Galsworthy is pointing out in the case of Falder--that there is no justice that is justice for all.

Although Galsworthy's sympathy is obviously with Falder, it is to be noted that Falder is actually at fault in planning to run away with a married woman and in stealing the money. The governor and the warders of the prison are not inhuman brutes; the business men are not hard-hearted. Galsworthy is strictly impartial in presenting the case of Falder and justice. He refuses to foster a biased viewpoint by making Falder less guilty or by making justice inordinately harsh. One simply knows that the justice meted out to Falder helps no one; soon it destroys his life.

Strife is another example of the playwright's remarkable impartiality. It is almost like a game of checkers.* No sooner does he complete a move for the capitalists than he makes another for the workers. He seems to have pledged himself to utter fairness to both, and the play proceeds on that basis.

In his eagerness to achieve dramatic impartiality Galsworthy seeks perfect impersonality of feeling. "Let me try to eliminate any bias," he writes, "and see the whole thing as should an umpire--one of those pure beings in white coats, purged of all the prejudices, passions, and predilections of mankind. Let me have no temperament for the time being. . . Only from an impersonal

*Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist

point of view, if there be such a thing, am I going to get even approximately at the truth."*

Complete impartiality is apt to make a play seem inconclusive. One wonders what the solution is, if something can be said for everything. R. U. Coats discusses both Shaw and Galsworthy in regard to this point. "Shaw is like a doctor called to the bedside of a patient, who at once prescribes a cure with dogmatic self-assurance and damns all other medicines as worthless. Galsworthy, similarly consulted, resembles one who provides an exceedingly careful diagnosis of the disease, but fails to suggest a remedy. To anyone complaining of this unsatisfactory result he might reply that his function as an artist goes no further. All that a dramatist is called upon to do is to reveal a given situation in terms of art, and then retire. His proper sphere is not to advocate or even to suggest reforms, but simply to arouse the emotions that shall demand them."**

In two of Galsworthy's later plays there is apparent a certain inconclusiveness. In The Skin Game the point of view of each family is presented with careful justness: one hears the best and the worst of each. Loyalties presents an unbiased picture of those who stand for rival ideals. In earlier work, while the playwright was always strictly fair, one could see where his sympathy lay. In these two plays one is left in doubt.

The restraint which Galsworthy exercises in the matter of technique and in the interest of impartiality sometimes leads him

*Another Sheaf, p. 12.

**John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 7-8.

to irony of a bitter type. This cannot be branded as inappropriate, for it merely reflects the irony of life. It seems as though the playwright were pointing out to us the disconcerting twists in things which cannot be adequately explained or eliminated. More often he deals with the ironies which result from human error and folly.

Strife has a strangely ironical conclusion. Both Anthony and Roberts lose, although each in his stubbornness had sacrificed much, and the final terms agreed upon are precisely the ones which had originally been proposed before the strike began.

HARNISS. A woman dead; and the two best men both broken!

TRUCH. (Staring at him--suddenly excited.) D'you know, sir--these terms, they're the very same we drew up together, you and I, and out to both sides before the fight began? All this--all this--and--and what for?

HARNISS. (In a slow, grim voice) That's where the fun comes in!

(Underwood, without turning from the door, makes a gesture of assent.)

(The curtain falls.)

Another ironical ending is found in The Mob. Stephen More, the pacifist, has been stabbed and killed. The following scene, called Aftermath, presents only a statue erected to the memory of the idealist. These words appear on the pedestal:

ERECTED
TO THE MEMORY
OF
STEPHEN MORE
"FAITHFUL TO HIS IDEAL"

Too late, his country recognizes his worth.

Analogous cases of irony are found in The Silver Box and in The Eldest Son. In each we are shown one law for the rich and another for the poor--illogical but true. A rich young man steals a purse and nothing happens. A poor man steals a cigarette box and is sentenced to one month's hard labor. Here we observe justice that is injustice. In the other play Sir William Cheshire insists that his under-garkeeper shall marry the girl in the village whom he has compromised. When the gentleman discovers that his son has behaved in precisely the same fashion with Lady Cheshire's maid, marriage no longer seems the obvious solution.

Less depressing but pointed are occasional ironical speeches scattered throughout the plays. In The Eldest Son, during a rehearsal of the play Caste, Joan seeks something that can serve as a baby.

JOAN. I can't rehearse with that thing. Can't you suggest something, Freda?

FREDA. Borrow a real one, Miss Joan. There are some that don't count much.

Of course the audience knows that Freda is thinking of her baby. In The Fugitive we find several ironical speeches, including one of Clare's:

GEORGE. Don't go like that! Do you suppose we're the only couple who've found things aren't what they thought, and have to put up with each other and make the best of it?

CLARE. Not by thousands.

GEORGE. Well, why do you imagine they do it?

CLARE. I don't know.

GEORGE. From a common sense of decency.

CLARE. Very!

Irony and inconclusiveness seem to produce a deep gloom in many of Galsworthy's plays. Sometimes the play ends in the death of one of the central characters, as in The Fugitive, The Mob, Justice, The Skin Game, and Loyalties. In other cases an ironical ending creates an atmosphere of gloom. Even The Pigeon, although humorous in places, impresses us with a sense of futility. Despite Wellwyn's kind efforts, the results are deplorable.

Yet Galsworthy is essentially an optimist. The tragedy that he gives us arises from causes that can be altered. It is true that he does not prescribe the remedy, but at least a remedy is possible. The evils exhibited can be corrected, and the thought inspires courage and hope.*

In general, the plays of Galsworthy exhibit a seriousness of tone that is consistent with the serious subject matter. Flashes of humor are rare, and sometimes the humor is of a labored quality. Coats believes that this is to some extent a temperamental defect. "In the true sanity of art," he writes, "healthy joy ought to be able to hold its own against all gloom and melancholy whatsoever."**

Sometimes humor is found in characters, sometimes in dialogue. In A Bit o' Love much humor is afforded by a group of rustics. In

*Worgan, Tendencies of Modern English Drama, p. 128-132.

**John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 26.

The Fugitive Galsworthy allows a little playing with his own profession. Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond are talking to Malise, Clare's friend.

LADY DEDMOND. I forget, Mr. Malise--you write, don't you?

MALISE. Such is my weakness.

LADY DEDMOND. Delightful profession.

SIR CHARLES. Doesn't tie you! What!

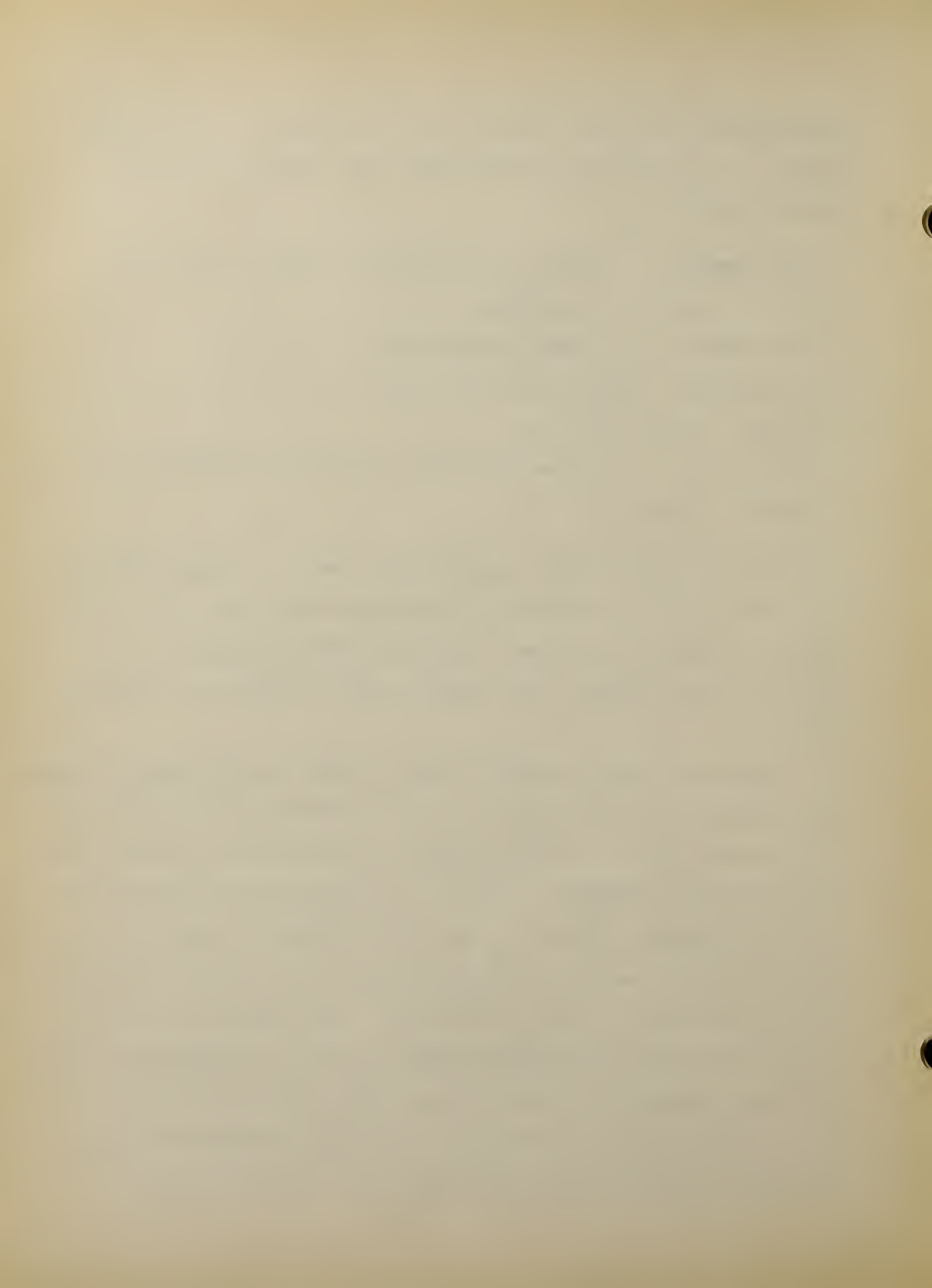
MALISE. Only by the head.

SIR CHARLES. I'm always thinkin' of writin' my experiences.

MALISE. Indeed!

No doubt Sir Charles would speak those lines in a tone partly boastful, partly patronizing. How weary writers must be of hearing that somebody who doesn't write is always intending to, as though it were indeed a very simple matter if one could find the time!

There are many delightful bits of humor in The Pigeon, although the general tone of the play is not rollicking by any means. Ann accuses her father of being willing to give away his trousers, and later the same evening we find him doing that very thing for the vagabond Ferrand. Timson's occasional remarks are amusing as he stirs now and then in his drunken stupor; so is his use of "horse" talk, reminiscent of his coachman days. The warmly argumentative speeches of Galway and Hoxton provide humor of a distinctly different type. Finally, the conclusion of the play is humorous. Three humble-men have taken advantage of Wellwyn's absentmindedness and unflinching generosity by collecting "tips." They try again.



CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. (In an attitude of expectation) This is the larst of it, sir.

WELLWYN. Oh! Ah! yes!

(He gives them money; then something seems to strike him, and he exhibits certain signs of vexation. Suddenly he recovers, looks from one to the other, and then at the tea things. A faint smile comes on his face.)

WELLWYN. You can finish the decanter. (He goes out in haste.)

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. (Clinking the coins) Third time of arskin'! April fool! Not 'arf! Good old pigeon!

SECOND HUMBLE-MAN. 'Uman being, I call 'im.

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. (Taking the three glasses from the last packing-case, and pouring very equally into them.) That's right. Tell you wot, I'd never 'a touched this unless 'e'd told me to, I wouldn't--not with 'im.

SECOND HUMBLE-MAN. Ditto to that! This is a bit of orl right! (Raising his glass.) Good luck!

THIRD HUMBLE-MAN. Same 'ere!

(Simultaneously they place their lips smartly against the liquor, and at once let fall their faces and their glasses.)

CHIEF HUMBLE-MAN. (With great solemnity) Crikey! Bill! Tea! . . . 'E's got us!

(The stage is blotted dark.)

Curtain.

Of the nineteen plays Galsworthy has written, exclusive of one-act plays, eighteen are of the realistic type and one, The Little Dream, romantic. It is with the realistic plays that we are especially concerned. We shall now consider each of these in a study of social values.

THE SILVER BOX

Galsworthy's first play, The Silver Box, which appeared in 1906, demonstrates the favoring of the rich at the expense of the poor in a court of law.

The play has a good beginning. Jack Barthwick arrives home drunk, accompanied by Jones, who is also advanced in liquor but who has offered Jack some assistance in getting into his own house. Jack mourns the fact that he has no money to reward Jones but hospitably invites him to have a drink. They talk in rather a maudlin fashion, touching politics in the second speech. Jones has told his name.

JACK. Jones? (He laughs.) There's 'nother Jones at College with me. I'm not a Socialist myself; I'm a Liberal--there's ve-lill difference, because of the principles of the Lib-Liberal Party. We're all equal before the law--tha's rot, tha's silly. (Laughs.)

Thus early in the play its keynote is sounded. And, dramatically, as a result of their drunken actions on this particular night, it is through these same two characters that the idea is demonstrated.

Young Barthwick waves a reticule which he has stolen from a girl, to "score her off." He drops off to sleep, and Jones, who is now thoroughly drunk, picks up the silken purse which has fallen to the floor and cunningly tucks that and the silver cigarette box into his pocket. Pleased with himself, he murmurs, "I'll score you off too, that's rot I'll do!"

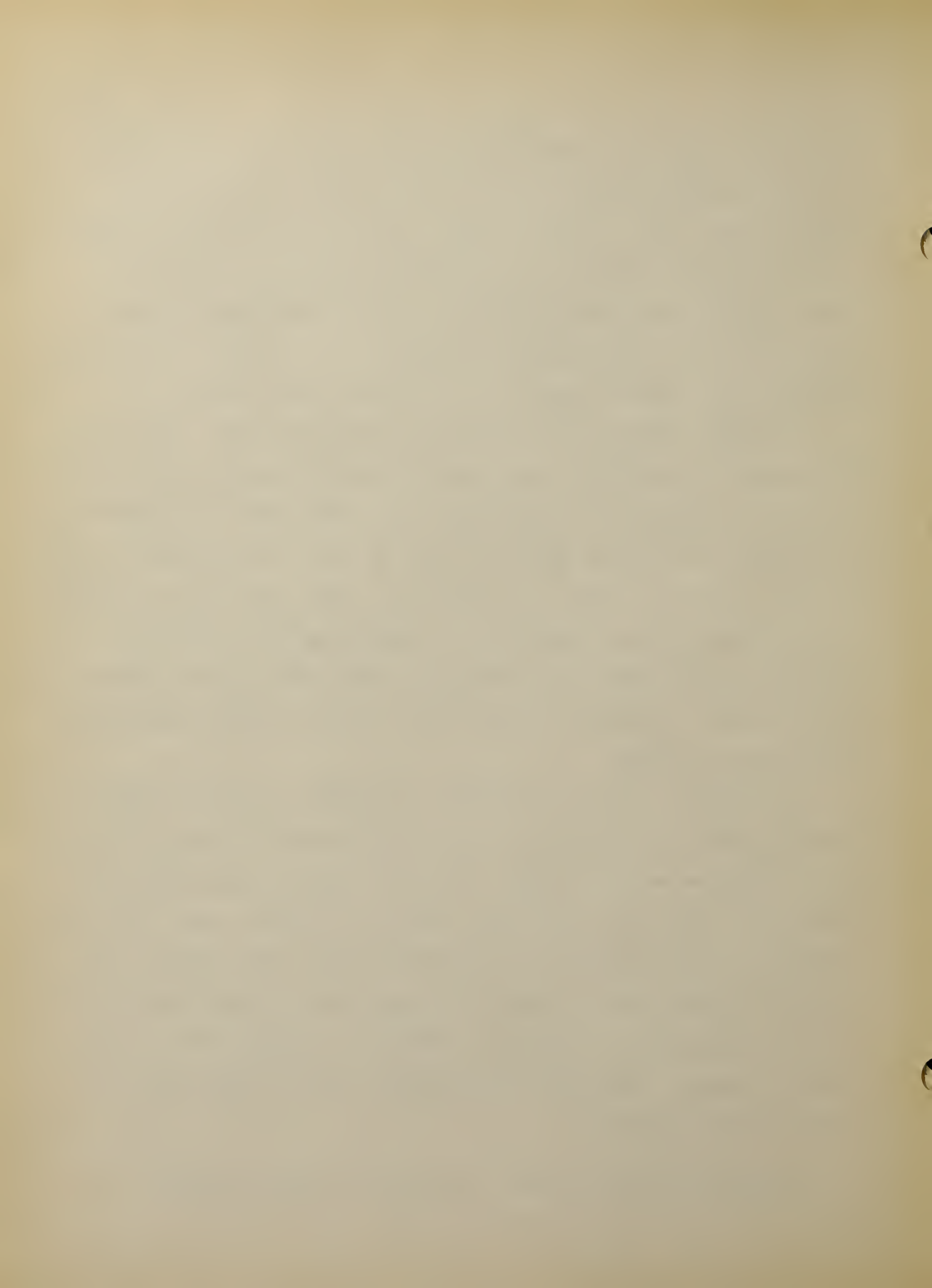
Jones is a poor man out of work, but it is to be noted that he does not steal for the purpose of bettering his situation. He is

naturally honest and, when sober, plans to get rid of the purse and box by throwing them in the water. He says to Mrs. Jones, regarding the box: "I had it when I was in liquor, and for what you do when you're in liquor you're not responsible--and that's Gawd's truth as you ought to know. I don't want the thing--I won't have it. I took it out o' spite. I'm no thief, I tell you; and don't you call me one, or it'll be the worse for you."

Meantime, however, Mrs. Jones has been suspected. She is a charwoman at Barthwick's home, and the disappearance of the silver box causes suspicion to fasten upon her. While she is talking with her husband, an officer enters, finds the box, and prepares to take her into custody. Jones, a loafer and a very poor sort of husband, here exhibits the only evidence of a better nature. He objects to having his wife taken, and when he is coolly disregarded, he strikes the officer. He is then charged with a double offense--theft and attacking an officer.

We already know that Barthwick is guilty of theft. Even his family learns this when the young lady in question appears for her bag. Likewise he has forged a check and finds himself in a difficulty from which only his father's money can rescue him. Yet young Barthwick is not wholly bad. Luckily for him, his escapades are regarded as pranks and his father's money can shield him from their natural consequences. Barthwick senior is disturbed about these things, however. Following the departure of the young lady, he thus addresses his son:

"One thing after another! Once more I should like to



know where you'd have been if it hadn't been for me! You don't seem to have any principles. You--you're one of those who are a nuisance to society; you--you're dangerous! What your mother would say I don't know. Your conduct, as far as I can see, is absolutely unjustifiable. It's--it's criminal. Why, a poor man who behaved as you've done. . . d'you think he'd have any mercy shown him? What you want is a good lesson. You and your sort are--(he speaks with feeling)--a nuisance to the community. Don't ask me to help you next time. You're not fit to be helped."

Jack replies in spirited fashion:

"All right, I won't then, and see how you like it. You wouldn't have helped me this time, I know, if you hadn't been scared the thing would get into the papers."

Young Jack is quite right. His father fears undesirable publicity, and he has a sad time trying to reconcile his conduct with his principles. In the speech quoted above, he charges that his son doesn't seem to have any principles. When the girl is demanding the stolen money which Jack cannot replace, she threatens to "summons" him, and at once the father interposes with an offer to settle the claim, "as a matter of--er--principle." When he learns that the silver box is missing and that Mrs. Jones may be to blame, he says at once, "On principle I shall make a point of fixing the responsibility; it goes to the foundations of security." Later, in talking to his wife, he gives vent to his feelings.

BARTHWICK. (Staring strangely) You! You can't imagine anything! You've no more imagination than a fly!

MRS. BARTHWICK. (Angrily) You dare to tell me that I have no imagination.

BARTHWICK. (Flustered) I--I'm upset. From beginning to end, the whole thing has been utterly against my principles.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Rubbish! You haven't any! Your principles

are nothing in the world but sheer--fight!

She seems to speak the truth, for when Jones's case is tried in court, Barthwick's principles have fled. He and his attorney arrange to hide the facts in regard to Jack's culpability. Jack conveniently forgets what happened on the night in question. Even when the magistrate tells Jones that he's a nuisance to the community, and Jack whispers to his father, "Dad! that's what you said to me!", Barthwick sternly silences him. He hears the pronouncement of Jones's sentence--one month with hard labor. Then he follows his son from the courtroom, deaf to the pitiful plea of Mrs. Jones, who turns to him with a humble gesture, "Oh! sir!--"

Mrs. Jones is the one who suffers most, and she is entirely blameless. Barthwick had accused his wife of having no imagination, but where was his? It was not sufficient to allow him to place himself in the position of Mrs. Jones, now deprived of her work, with a soiled reputation, a husband sentenced to jail, and three young children to support. Galsworthy's sympathy enables him to pity her, to feel indignation at the injustice which causes her so much woe when one of young Barthwick's ilk can escape. He presents her as a character of poignant appeal. She is loyal to her husband, despite the fact that he does not support her, is too attentive to one Rosie, frequently drinks too much and abuses her. She is a meek, patient creature who does not exclaim against her lot in life.

And then there are the three innocent children whom she works so nobly to support. Even Jones is not without a feeling of love for them. "If you think I want to leave the little beggars you're

bloomin' well mistaken," he says, and his wife replies, "Of course I know you're fond of them." But then, in the bitterness of their want, Jones continues: "If I'd ha' known as much as I do now, I'd never ha' had one o' them. What's the use o' bringin' 'em into a state o' things like this? It's a crime, that's what it is; but you find it out too late; that's what's the matter with this 'ere world."

In the beginning of the court scene we are permitted to listen to the case of two little girls who are homeless and had been found crying outside a public-house. The mother had gone away and the father was without work. At another place in the play, one of Mrs. Jones's children is heard crying outside the dining-room window of Barthwick's home. The crying annoys Mrs. Barthwick, and her husband closes the window, thus symbolically shutting out the case of the Joneses, refusing to listen. In this play Galsworthy seems to be making a special plea for children, who are so often the innocent victims of marital conflicts. He says to the audience, in effect: "What are you going to do about this? Are you, too, a Barthwick?"

JOY

Joy, Galsworthy's second play, is a play on the letter "I." It presents various cases of egoism in which jealousy, infidelity, selfishness, and deceit are all labeled "special cases" and are supposedly excusable on that basis.

There is very little plot. In fact, Joy is inferior to most

of Galsworthy's plays. Joy is a spoiled, conceited girl of eighteen, whom we find living in the home of her great-uncle, Colonel Hope. She is entirely self-centred and lives to be praised and loved. Her mother and father are living apart, and her mother has fallen in love with Maurice Lever, who comes with Mrs. Gwyn (Joy's mother) to be a guest in the home of the Hopes. Joy is inordinately jealous of Lever, since he diverts her mother's affection from herself. Mrs. Gwyn, on the other hand, has no scruples about this love affair with Lever, since she feels she has been denied much happiness and well deserves any he can bring her.

Lever is selling fraudulent oil stock and is willing to sell it to Colonel Hope, his host, rather than run the risk of having the scheme detected. When Mrs. Gwyn argues the point with him, he says, "You can't act in a case like this as if you'd only a principle to consider. It's the--the special circumstances--" And for the sake of her own selfish love, Mrs. Gwyn condones the wrong.

Dick Verton is in love with Joy and very ready to soothe her and sympathize with her on all occasions. Even his love is selfish, though, since he is working for his own happiness. Joy's jealousy of Lever lasts until she finds herself in love with Dick, and then comes understanding of her mother's position. Herein the playwright would have us see that unselfish understanding comes only with love. Incidentally, however, there is then the egoism of young lovers. To Joy's whispered, "Dick, is love always like this?",

Dick responds with conviction, "It's never been like this before. It's you and me!"

Several label names are used: The lovely parlor maid is named Pose; Joy is always seeking joy; Ernest Blunt, Hope's son-in-law, is coolly frank and outspoken in a hotly contested tennis game with the Colonel; and the Colonel is determinedly if foolishly hopeful. He and the family governess discuss the love affair between the young people.

MISS BEECH. If only things would last between them!

COLONEL. (Fiercely) Last! By George, they'd better--(He stops, and looking up with a queer sorry look) I say, Peachey--Life's very funny!

MISS BEECH. Men and women are! (Touching his forehead tenderly) There, there--take care of your poor, dear head!

For the moment Colonel Hope had forgotten that his own love affair with Nell hadn't lasted, that neither had Mrs. Gwyn's.

The philosophy of the drama comes from the lips of "Peachey"--or Miss Beech--who seems to be identified with the great hollow tree which figures in the play. She is a delightful soul and has a fine sympathetic understanding of people--even of things that crawl. She takes possession of a pot of worms, calls them "poor creatures," and later returns them to their native soil. She offers to sleep in a bedroom full of earwigs, when nobody else is willing. She checks off the "special cases" for us as they are exhibited. Finally, when the Colonel is overcome at the thought of his niece's frailty, Miss Beech says solemnly, "Ah, my dear!

"We're all the same; we're all as hollow as that tree! When it's ourselves it's always a special case!" And that is the main thought of the play.

STRIFE

A struggle between Capital and Labor is presented in Strife. This play, written in 1909, is generally conceded to be Galsworthy's masterpiece. It has already been cited as a striking example of the playwright's impartiality. There is no love interest in Strife; the characters are too busy fighting. Walter Prichard Eaton says of it: "It is an oasis of sanity in a desert of sex."*

Strife pictures from both points of view a strike in a great tin plate mill. The chief protagonists are John Anthony and David Roberts. Anthony is a proud and willful leader, but he commands the respect of his associates, fighting the battle of Capital to do as it will. It should be said of him that he has certain firm convictions that govern his actions. He believes that Capitalism, involving control by the strongest and most capable, is a necessity for the future of English industry, and that yielding to the demands of Labor will mean eventual ruin for masters and men. Roberts, a fiery Welshman, typifies the spirit of revolt. He is a fanatical agitator who is willing to sacrifice everything for his cause.

Act One shows us Anthony, Chairman of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, dominating an executive meeting of directors. A strike has

*Strife, a Dramatic Debate.

been in progress five months, and it is now February of a hard winter. The situation is extremely serious. The company has lost a great deal of money. Prices are rising, some unfilled contracts will have to be completed at a heavy loss, while rival companies are getting business which ordinarily would come to them. No dividends are being paid, shares are slumping in value, and the stockholders are disturbed. On the other side, there is great suffering among the workers, women and children enduring the rigors of cold and hunger. There is a willingness to compromise, but neither leader will permit it.

Act Two takes us to the interior of Roberts's home, where his wife is seriously ill. Anthony's daughter Enid calls upon Mrs. Roberts, who was formerly her maid. She tries to help Annie by contributing food, but Roberts sternly requires that it be sent back. He will not accept favors from Anthony's daughter. Roberts realizes that he is killing his wife by his inflexible stand for principle, but he will not weaken.

Later that afternoon Roberts addresses a meeting of the workers and again succeeds in stirring them against Capital. At the close of his speech he is told that his wife is dying.

Act Three presents the adjourned meeting of the directors. The death of Mrs. Roberts is made known, and Anthony's own son makes a plea for a settlement. Old Anthony makes a final stand for firmness, but it is a losing battle. He resigns his chairmanship. As the play concludes, Roberts and Anthony are both on the stage. "Both broken men, my friend Roberts!" Anthony says, and

indeed they are. They exchange a prolonged look before Anthony walks slowly off, swaying as though about to fall. Then comes the ironical ending--the discovery that the terms of settlement are exactly the same as those proposed and rejected "before the fight began." Werness comments grimly, "That's where the fun comes in!"

Old Anthony's valet, Frost, utters words of wisdom which plead for tolerance. Speaking to Enid, he says: "Mr. Anthony is a little difficult, M'm. It's not as if he were a younger man, and knew what was good for 'im; he will have his own way. . . I'm sure if the other gentlemen were to give up to Mr. Anthony, and quietly let the men 'ave what they want, afterwards, that'd be the best way. I find that very useful with him at times, M'm. . . I've no patience with this Roberts. . . There's a kind of man that never forgives the world because 'e wasn't born a gentleman. That I say is--no man that's a gentleman looks down on another man because 'e 'appens to be a class or two above 'im, no more than if 'e 'appens to be a class or two below."

THE ELDEST SON

The Eldest Son, which was written in 1909, presents the problem of morality as applied to the rich and to the poor. The play was not produced until 1912, and was not particularly successful on the stage.

Sir William Cheshire is a bull-necked, choleric baronet of fifty-eight, possessed of a great pride in the family name and

position. When he learns that one of his servants has compromised a village girl, he is most insistent that the two marry. He cannot allow immoral conduct, and young Dunning is told that he must leave.

Soon it develops that Sir William's son and heir is similarly involved with pretty Freda Studdenham, Lady Cheshire's maid. Will the same code apply here? Decidedly not. Freda is willing to give up Bill, but he chivalrously insists upon marrying her, offering to take her away to Canada. Lady Cheshire is scandalized. Sir William declares that marriage in the circumstances is impossible. What will become of the family name? Bill is expected to sit in Parliament some day, and, when the time comes, to take over the family affairs. But Bill still maintains that he is ready to marry Freda. She will not accept the sacrifice, however. Her pride forbids.

Freda's father is a fine character whose pride matches the girl's. "Don't be afraid, Sir William!" he cries. "We want none of you! She'll not force herself where she's not welcome. She may ha' slipped her good name, but she'll keep her proper pride. I'll have no charity marriage in my family. . . Well? She's not the first this has happened to since the world began, an' she won't be the last. Come away, now, come away." He and Freda go out together.

Another interesting character in the play is Dot Cheshire, who is distinctly a feminist. She is modern in her viewpoint, candid in speech, and daring in thought. She resents the bandbox sort of life that seems to be the lot of women.

DOT. It's always like this, women kept in blinkers. Rose-leaves and humbug! That awful old man!

JOAN. Dot!

CHRISTINE. Don't talk of father like that!

DOT. Well, he is! And Bill will be just like him at fifty! Heaven help Freda, whatever she's done! I'd sooner be a private in a German regiment than a woman.

At the conclusion of the play Dot enters after the Studdenhams have gone off. She inquires for Freda. "Has she really had the pluck?" Lady Cheshire nods and Dot clasps her hands together. Standing there in the middle of the room she looks from her brother to her father, from her father to her brother. Then a quaint little pitying smile comes on her lips. She gives a faint shrug of her shoulders, and the curtain falls.

JUSTICE

It is said that Justice, which was produced in 1910, was responsible for some reforms in the English penal system at which it seemed to be directed.* It is a powerful play, more biased than Strife, and intensely dramatic in conception and treatment.

The central character, William Filder, is a junior clerk in the law office of James How and his son Walter. He is described as a "pale, good-looking young man, with quick, rather scared eyes." He has a peculiarly sensitive, sympathetic nature, which has prompted him to champion the cause of Ruth Honeywill, a young married woman, mother of three children, who is cruelly treated by her husband. They decide to go away together, but it is

*Cunliffe, Modern English Playwrights, p. 101.

necessary that they have funds. While cashing a check at the bank, it occurs to young Falder that by simply changing nine pounds to read ninety pounds, he may obtain all the money he needs for the trip. He forges the check, intending to repay the money later. The whole thing is done in a twinkling. It is the first step in a life's tragedy.

Falder is suspected, arrested, tried, and convicted. The sentence is penal servitude for three years. The harshness of prison life is clearly depicted. One scene reveals Falder in his cell, tormented by quiet, almost crazed by noise. He is on the verge of insanity. Cokeson, a kindly man from the law office, visits the prison in the hope of alleviating Falder's suffering. Finally, at the end of two and a half years, the prisoner is released on ticket-of-leave. His health and reputation ruined, he finds it difficult to obtain employment. At length things begin to look brighter, and it is possible that Ruth may secure a divorce from her husband, when Falder is charged with using forged references in seeking employment, and with failure to report as a ticket-of-leave man. He is about to be taken away when he throws himself down a staircase and breaks his neck.

There is a false note at the end of the play. Cokeson says, "No one'll touch him now! Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!" Somehow that doesn't gibe with what has gone before, and it has served to divert attention from the tragedy. Actors have found it to be an extremely difficult speech to utter without making it seem funny or profane.

But to return to Falder: his is an extremely pathetic case. In this play there is no doubt where Galsworthy's sympathy lies, even though he seems fair to the opposing side. Falder is essentially honest but extremely weak. He is physically weak, the nervous, consumptive type. He is sensitive and sympathetic. His chivalrous nature has occasioned all his trouble. For him the rigors of prison life are unbearable. Essentially good rather than evil, he is nevertheless the victim of his weakness. Once out of prison, he is shunned as an outcast from society. Making a great effort to push on in any case, he is suddenly confronted with the vision of prison walls again. It is too much. Death is to be preferred.

Galsworthy does not point out a remedy for this sort of thing. But what intelligent person with a spark of humanity could watch such a drama and not demand a remedy? Falder's case is, in a sense, a special one, and it is certainly difficult to handle. But who can say what might not have been accomplished by greater friendliness and understanding?

THE FUGITIVE

The Fugitive, according to Clayton Hamilton, hovers tantalizingly between the two extremes of effectiveness and ineffectiveness. "The story," he tells us, "is interesting; the characters are true to life: the dialogue is written with that high regard for truth which is mystically indistinguishable from a high regard for beauty."* Let us examine the play.

*Problems of the Playwright, p. 157.

Clare Dedmond, after five years of marital misery, finds wedded life unbearable and decides to leave her husband. She is a lover of beauty, is fond of poetry and music, while George is prosaic and matter-of-fact. They seem to have no ideas in common, and Clare shrinks from a purely physical relationship.

She leaves her home, seeks the advice of her literary friend, Malise, and soon finds employment selling gloves in a draper's shop. The unaccustomed drudgery is too much for her, and after a time she returns to Malise to stay with him as his mistress. George finds her, offers to allow her to return to him on quite reasonable terms, but it is too late. Thwarted in his generous offer, George seeks a divorce and sues Malise for two thousand pounds. This ruins Malise professionally, and Clare, who loves him, leaves rather than cause him further trouble.

But she is not fitted to earn her living and is entirely without funds. In the final act we find her in a restaurant, on the brink of a sad career, when suddenly she has a vision of the life before her and, like Falder, chooses death instead. She drinks poison there in the restaurant and life quietly slips away to the accompaniment of a hunting song, "This day a stag must die."

Again, like Falder, she is a victim--to a love of beauty and ideals. Both Twisden, the solicitor, and Malise had tried to warn her. "As you haven't money," said Twisden, "you shouldn't have been pretty. You're up against the world and you'll get no mercy from it." Malise spoke more heatedly and more at length, concluding thus: "Will they let you be? Woe and cry! The hunt was

joined the moment you broke away! It will never let up! Covert to covert--till they've run you down, and you're back in the cart, and God pity you!"

The play obviously is an indictment against the harshness of a world that produces such tragedies. What is the moral? That every girl should be trained to earn her own living? Perhaps. When Clare's brother is discussing her situation with her, he says, "And you're too pretty to go on the tack of the New Woman and that kind of thing--haven't been brought up to it." She replies, ironically, "British home-made summer goods, light and attractive--don't wear long." And of course the playwright is calling attention to the sad results of lack of sympathy and understanding in married life.

THE PIGEON

The Pigeon, called a fantasy in three acts, was published in 1912. It is one of the most whimsically amusing of Galsworthy's plays. It concerns the problem of the vagabond.

Christopher Wellwyn, an artist, is extravagantly generous to the poor and needy. He is so constructed that he cannot refuse to help anybody. He has the habit of passing out cards to those in distress, and the recipients never fail to apply for further aid. Wellwyn's daughter Ann struggles against her father's extravagance, but it cannot be curbed.

The poor and needy ones whom we meet in the play are Guinevere Megan, a flower-seller, Timson, a former cabman, and Ferrand, an



alien. Rory Megan, the girl's husband, also appears, but he is not essentially one of Wellwyn's proteges. The three mentioned arrive separately at Wellwyn's house on Christmas Eve, presenting cards that he has given them, and since Ann is safely on her way to bed, the "pigeon" undertakes to shelter them for the night.

New Year's Day finds them still there, despite Ann's protests. Mrs. Megan is serving as model for Wellwyn, Timson is going through the motions of washing brushes, and Ferrand, at the moment, is looking for employment. Of course he finds none. Three social reformers arrive and make recommendations. A clergyman, Canon Bartley, believes that Mrs. Megan should return to her husband. Professor Galway is of the opinion that the State should be supported in helping the undeserving. Sir Thomas Hoxton, always contrary-minded, insists that support should be given only to private organizations for the assistance of the deserving.

The dependants become more difficult. They regard Wellwyn as a pigeon easily plucked. Ferrand makes love to Mrs. Megan. Timson applies himself to the drinking of rum. Mrs. Megan causes a new sensation by attempting to drown herself, but she is saved and prosecuted for attempting suicide.

Ann finally insists that they move to some other lodging where they cannot be found by the card holders. Moving day is April first, and the play finishes with Wellwyn's giving drink, "tips," and even his new address to the three humble-men who are moving the furniture.

Certainly there is no solution to the problem of the vagabond.

In many respects the ending is very inconclusive. What lesson does the playwright teach? For one thing, he shows us that degenerates of the type presented dislike the idea of confinement in an institution. Timson's experience had no corrective result. As soon as he was released he became hopelessly intoxicated again. Mrs. Megan denounces such confinement as "no life at all" after selling flowers, and she is an ardent seeker of a joyous life. Ferrand, the philosopher, states the case very clearly. "Since I saw you, monsieur, I have been in three institutions. They are palaces. One may eat upon the floor--though it is true--for kings--they eat too much of skilly there. One little thing they lack--those palaces. It is understanding of the human heart. In them tame birds pluck wild birds naked. . . Monsieur, of their industry I say nothing. They do a good work while they attend with their theories to the sick, and the tame old and the good unfortunate deserving. Above all to the little children. But, monsieur, when all is done, there are always us hopeless ones. . . We wild ones--we know a thousand times more of life than ever will those sirs. They waste their time trying to make rooks white. Be kind but do not try to change our skins. . . The harm we do to others--is it so much? If I am criminal, dangerous--shut me up! I would not nity myself--nevare. But we in whom something moves--like that flame, monsieur, that cannot keep still--we others--we others--we are not many--that must have motion in our lives, do not let them make us prisoners with their theories, because we are not like them; it is life itself they would enclose."

Galsworthy further points out that abstract theory or

general principle cannot solve the problem. The clergyman, the professor, and the justice of the peace all fail in their suggestions. They demonstrate both figuratively and literally their capacity for losing sight of the individual. Ferrand says of them: "Those sirs, with their theories, they can clean our skins and chain our 'abits--that soothes for them the aesthetic sense; it gives them too their good little importance. But our spirits they cannot touch, for they nevere understand. Without that, monsieur, all is dry as a parched skin of orange."

There it is again--the plea for understanding. To the playwright it matters not whether we consider Mrs. Jones, Falder, Clare Dedmond, Ferrand, Timson, Mrs. Megan, or a hundred others. What is our capacity for understanding?

THE MOB

The tragedy of the idealist is unfolded in The Mob. Stephen More is a pacifist whose convictions prompt him to oppose the war into which his country is about to enter. He holds the position of an Under-Secretary of State, and his prospects are excellent. His stand on the war question ruins his hopes, but he rigidly defends his ideals.

He believes that a big nation should not wantonly attack a little nation. It should protect the smaller country or else leave it alone. He deplores England's proneness to extend her territory by finding easy pretexts for quarrels.

More's wife disagrees with him. Her father is a general who

has served his country for fifty years. Her three brothers are serving at the front. Despite this and the realization that he is about to ruin a political career, More goes to the House of Commons and delivers a speech of protest after the English troops are actually at war.

The results have been predicted. He alienates not only the members of his own family, but he becomes the object of fierce attacks by the press, by mobs, and by individuals. He is branded as unpatriotic. Despite all this, he sticks to his principles.

One of his wife's brothers is killed in action. Katherine herself makes a final plea that he abandon his stand, but it is useless. She leaves him, taking their daughter with her. Almost at once More is attacked by a mob that rushes into his house. A crazed girl stabs him. A Union Jack is laid across his breast, and the body is left alone. There follows the final scene, designated as "Aftermath," in which appears a statue erected to the memory of More, "faithful to his ideal."

It is difficult to say whether or not More was justified in his position. Whatever may be our sentiment in regard to that, we can at least appreciate the play "as a study of the eternal warfare ever being waged between fidelity to principle and worldly compromise. More. . . belongs to the glorious company of idealists, whom the world first crucifies and then canonizes, taking care to delay the erection of monuments in their honor till they themselves can trouble the world no more with their disturbing dreams."*

*Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 133.

A BIT O' LOVE

Michael Strangway, central figure of A Bit o' Love, is another idealist, misunderstood and reviled by his associates. When we first see him he is playing the flute before a large framed photograph of a woman. His age is about thirty-five. "There is something about the whole of him that makes him seem not quite present. A gentle creature, burnt within."*

Strangway is a clergyman whose wife has left him for a former lover, Dr. Desart, the only man she ever really cared for. Strangway is disturbed by her going, as is evidenced by his going off into reveries now and then. Of course there is talk in the village, and Strangway is severely criticized. Beatrice appears and begs him to release her without insisting upon divorce proceedings, which would bring publicity and disgrace. Strangway, loving her mightily, lets her go. He is then called upon to console Jack Gremer, a villager who has lost his wife by death.

News of what has happened is quickly spread about town and very generally and heatedly discussed. People who have not the slightest understanding of the circumstances freely offer their opinions. There develops a contempt for Strangway, who has seemed too weak to defend his rights in the matter. They do not know their curate. A fierce spiritual struggle is going on within him, but mere physical force cannot help matters. He reaches the point where he doubts whether there can be a God, and he concludes that the best thing for him to do is to commit suicide. He prepares for a hanging in the barn, but two people prevent him from

*From the beginning of the play.

carrying out his purpose. Little Tibby Jarland, a member of his confirmation class, is curled up in the hay. By her artless chatter about the moon and other things she awakens anew his love of Nature. She goes, and out of the shadows comes Jack Cremer, the man whom Strangway had consoled in his bereavement.

STRANGWAY. Yes, Jack. How goes it?

CREMER. 'Tis empty, zurr. But I'll get on some'ow.

STRANGWAY. You put me to shame.

CREMER. No, zurr. I'd be killin' meself, if I didn' feel I must stick it, like vu said.

(They stand gazing at each other in the moonlight.)

STRANGWAY. (Very low) I honor you.

We have our last glimpse of Strangway leaning against the lintel of the door, looking at the moon. Lifting his hand in the gesture of prayer, he says: "God, of the moon and the sun; of joy and beauty, of loneliness and sorrow--give me strength to go on, till I love every living thing!"

That is the message of the play--love. We see exhibited again the harshness of the world's judgment, made possible because of lack of understanding. In despair, Strangway sees only death ahead. Then magically, through friendship he is drawn back to the loveliness of God's world.

THE FOUNDATIONS

The Foundations is perhaps the most amusing of Galsworthy's plays. It is called "an extravagant play," and such it seems to be, for the story is absurd and incredible.

Lord and Lady William Dromondy, who are extremely rich, live in a palatial residence in Park Lane. A supposed bomb is discovered in the wine-cellar, and suspicion rests upon a plumber, Bob Lemmy. Bob comes of a poor family and lives with his aged mother, a seamstress. Thus the very rich and the very poor are introduced.

The characters are well portrayed and have amusing peculiarities. The moral of the play seems to indicate that extreme poverty and "sweated labor" do not provide a good basis for a social order. The only satisfactory way to overcome these conditions is through mutual understanding and sympathy. Happiness and prosperity come through love. Mrs. Lemmy says philosophically: "Therr bain't nothin' in life, yu know, but a bit o' lovin'--all said an' done; bit o' lovin', with the wind an' the stars out. . . 'T'es the 'eart makes the world go round; 'tesn't nothin' else, in my opinion."

THE SKIN GAME

The Skin Game treats of a bitter feud between a family of the landowning class and one of the manufacturing class. Hornblower, a successful manufacturer of pottery, purchases a part of the estate of Hillcrist, a conservative country gentleman of the old school. He plans to turn out the cottagers, to purchase some adjoining land, and to build thereon a large factory which will doubtless spoil Hillcrist's excellent view of his estate.

Hornblower's intentions are not to be scowled upon. He hopes to develop a large tract of land, to become the center of a small

universe of his own, and perhaps eventually to be rewarded by a seat in Parliament. He sees himself as a public benefactor. The Hillerists regard him as a scoundrel and a cad. To his annoyance, they refuse to recognize socially his daughter-in-law Chloe, the wife of his elder son Charles.

There develops a fierce struggle over the building of the proposed factory. Hornblower is determined to build it, and Hillerist is determined to prevent its being built. It is decidedly a "skin game," a "fight to the finish." Jill, the daughter of Hillerist, and Rolf, the younger son of Hornblower, are attracted to each other and attempt to halt the strife, but to no purpose.

Eventually the contested property is awarded to Hornblower, who is able to outbid his enemy. Then greater meanness is resorted to. Mrs. Hillerist has learned some unfortunate things about the past of Chloe, and she unscrupulously drags them forward, causing the girl horrible suffering. In the end, both families are degraded by the quarrel. The play is concluded with this speech of Hillerist's: "When we began this fight, we had clean hands--are they clean now? What's gentility worth if it can't stand fire?"

This play, published in 1920, has an allegorical meaning beyond the obvious one. It touches upon another conflict, the Great War, which also brought about a certain lowering of ideals and a use of unworthy weapons on all sides."

*Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 151.

THE FAMILY MAN

The disaster which may result from the exercise of too much parental authority is the basis of The Family Man. John Builder is a tyrannical, hot-tempered family head who feels that he can rule the household with an iron hand. One by one the members of his family revolt. Athene, his daughter, marries "to all intents and purposes" but not legally, remembering the awful picture of married life in her own family. Even Mrs. Builder goes, feeling that she can bear the tyranny no longer. For striking his own child and assaulting a constable, Builder is put in prison. The end of the play shows the return of Mrs. Builder to a subdued husband.

The play is highly improbable and farcical, but it reasserts an idea that Galsworthy has implanted in The Forsyte Saga: a man cannot treat the members of his family like a piece of property.

LOYALTIES

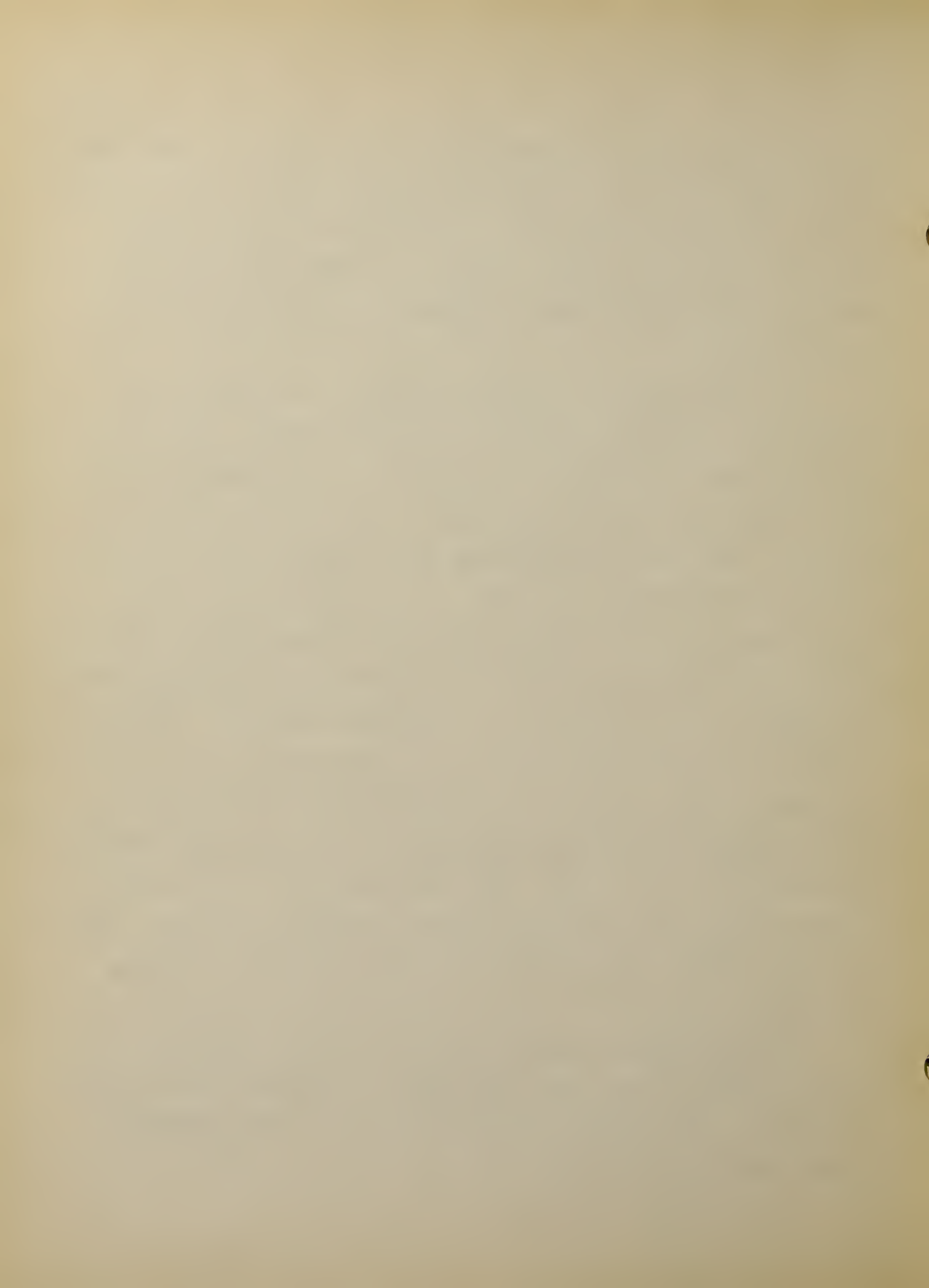
Loyalties is one of Galsworthy's best plays. It shows several people loyal to the best traditions of the set or class to which they belong.

The story starts with the discovery of a robbery. It is about midnight at the home of Charles and Lady Adela Winsor. A house party is in progress, and the host and hostess, preparing for bed, discuss their guests. One is Ferdinand de Levis, a rich young Jew whose extreme fondness for money makes him rather unpopular. Another is Ronald Dancy, a retired army captain. Dancy is apparently

very short of funds. Not long before he had given his mare Rosemary to de Levis, feeling that he could not afford to keep it himself. De Levis has just sold the horse for a thousand pounds, which action Dancy resents. During the evening Dancy had won a ten-pound bet from de Levis by jumping from the floor to the top of a bookcase.

De Levis appears at the door of Winsor's bedroom with the story that he has been robbed of a thousand pounds. The money had been taken from under the pillow while he was having a bath, and the bedroom door had been locked. The thief had entered by a window. The Winsors are chagrined and indignant that de Levis is capable of suspecting the guests. As a matter of fact, he suspects Dancy, who needs money, is resentful about the sale of Rosemary, and agile enough to leap from one balcony to another--had he not jumped from the floor to the top of the bookcase? An investigation is started and pushed by de Levis when he finds himself scorned by Dancy's friends and even blackballed for the Jockey Club. The missing banknotes are traced by means of their numbers and Dancy is found guilty. They were sent to an Italian wine merchant to pay a debt of honor involving the man's daughter. Dancy's attorney advises him to leave the country and enter the war in Morocco.

Dancy's disgrace is most keenly felt when he faces his wife. She is loyalty itself, and even tries to shield him from a police inspector. But a shot is heard from the next room. Dancy has taken his life.



What are the loyalties? Perhaps the greatest is that fine loyalty of Mabel Dancy to a husband in disgrace. There is the loyalty of the Winsors to their guests. All of Dancy's friends are loyal to him; even a fellow guest who had touched the wet sleeve of Dancy's coat on that rainy night after the robbery does not betray him. De Levis, loyal to his Jewish blood, resents the unjust treatment accorded him. "My race was old," he points out, "when you were all savages."

WINDOWS

Faith Bly is the central character in Windows. She has had an unfortunate start in life and at the age of eighteen is the mother of an illegitimate child. Distracted, in an unhappy moment she stifles the child and is imprisoned for two years. Upon her release she is employed in the home of the Marches, where her father is a window cleaner. Faith is unfitted for domestic service and eager for freedom and "life." She encourages Johnny, the son of the Marches, who is an idealist quite sorry for Faith and willing to marry her. She is dismissed from the house and becomes friendly with a young man of questionable moral habits. A police inspector leads him away, and Faith is urged to stay with the Marches. She refuses. The Marches do not understand her. She leaves, saying, "I'm sorry I've been so much trouble. . . There's nothing to be done with a girl like me."

Meanwhile Mrs. March has made an illuminating discovery. She addresses her surprised family.



MRS. MARCH. You thought she wanted--to be saved. Silly!
She--just--wants--to--be--loved. Quite natural!

MR. MARCH. Joan, what's happened to you?

MRS. MARCH. (Smiling and nodding) See--people--as--they--
are! Then you won't be--disappointed. Don't--have--
ideals! Have--vision--just simple--vision!

* * * *

MRS. MARCH. The room's full of Gas. Open the windows!
Open! And let's--walk--out--into the air!

Mention of windows occurs frequently throughout the play. Faith's father, a window-cleaner by profession, says, "Windows never stay clean. You clean 'em, and they're dirty again in no time." Taken symbolically, this would seem to suggest that if now and then our vision is clear and we see things in their true proportions, inevitably our windows get dirty again, and our vision is obscured and distorted. Bly says, "There's windows all round, but you can't see." Our vision is too narrow.

THE FOREST

The Forest presents the social injustice of high finance, in which innocent investors are made to suffer heavy losses through the machinations of powerful operators. Adrian Bastaple is the financier whose ruthless abuse of power causes tremendous suffering.

The time is the late 'nineties, just before the Boer War. African shares are threatened with a slump. Bastaple, who is interested in "South African Concessions," believes that the employment of coolie labor will cause the shares to rise. It seems



desirable to draw public attention to the evils of slave trade in Belgian Central Africa, and for this purpose an expedition, headed by John Strood, is sent out to bring back reports of slavery in the Upper Congo in time for the general meeting of "South African Concessions" which is to be held ten months later.

Acts Two and Three are set in Africa, in the forest itself. Strood is diverted by a rumor of the discovery of diamonds farther south, and he promptly changes his original plans in the hope of finding diamonds and adding glory to the expedition. He is a domineering leader who easily makes enemies among his own men and the natives. He antagonizes a half-caste Arab girl, who is responsible for his death in the heart of the forest. Other members of the party meet death also, and of course the expedition fails. A surviving member of the party carries back to London a story of defeat.

The outlook is not bright. Bastable himself has lost a substantial investment in the expedition, the coolie labor idea is doomed, and rumors of war with consequent losses are unmistakable. But Bastable is a resourceful man with a fertile brain and a lust for money. He seizes upon the diamond rumor and converts it into heavy profits for himself. The scheme is simple: He causes the spread of a report that Strood has discovered diamonds and reached the coast. The shares rise instantly. Bastable sells out at enormous profit before the Boer War, rewarding Farrell, his confidential man, with a ten per cent. participation. The perpetrator is safe, for his tracks are carefully covered.

The injustice of the scheme is clear. Hundreds of investors

have been defrauded; Strood and other members of the expedition have lost their lives; native Africans have been cruelly treated.

Bastable has been called a financial Napoleon, "a megalomaniac of infinite coolness and resource, who is gifted with fierceness of purpose and an unbending resolution, and who, once he embarks upon a scheme, will be stopped in it by nobody, whatever the suffering involved, until at last he thinks in terms of continents and millions and wields illimitable power over the lives and fortunes of his fellow men."* When Bastable is talking with Baron Zimbosch, who brings confidential tidings of the coming war, the Baron exclaims, "Bon Dieu! you are all idealists in this country." Thereupon Bastable smiles, and the Baron quickly qualifies his statement. "Ah! not you, Mr. Bastable--not you!"

A Scotchman, James Collie, who is one of the victims of the expedition, utters words of wisdom. "There's a ween o' plans go wrong because o' personalities." Bastable and Strood are both powerful personalities whose natural functioning works disaster. Again, the Scotchman says: "The Empire's built by men that's got an itch to measure theirsels against the impossible. Strood's a great man in his way." So is Bastable. So is Napoleon. But "measuring themselves" involves a tremendous cost.

The African scenes afford much that is splendid and exciting. Men's struggle against Nature, the Englishmen's conflict with the hostile savages, and the sturdy spirit of the empire-builders--all these are depicted in vivid style. There is the ominous under-current of the ton-toms, which suggests O'Neil's Emperor Jones.

*Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, p. 82.

Collie remarks, amusingly, "Those damned drums! Meh! but 'tis awfu' like the Salvation Army in Glasgow." One marvels at the dog-like devotion of Amina to Herrick. She watches him jealously and would endure anything for his sake. A case in point is her escape from Strood and his party, who have been holding her captive. Triumphant, she returns to the deserted Herrick and clasps his knees.

AMINA. Amino come back! Escape--come through forest--back to Herrick.

(Again she embraces his knees, and is about to kiss his feet.)

HERRICK. (Rising) Get up. I don't like you to do that. (Raising her by the shoulder and stroking it) Where did you leave them, Amina?

AMINA. Two marches. (With a smile that shows her white teeth) They not clever--Amina too clever. At night--she burn rope--look!

(She shows a burnt place on her arm.)

HERRICK. God! That must have hurt!

Self-sacrificing loyalty of men to men is shown when Herrick rigidly insists that Amina guide him to Strood, whom she hates, and again when both men are making a final stand for life, endangered on all sides by bloodthirsty savages.

OLD ENGLISH

Old English is deficient in plot and is largely a character study of Sylvanus Heythorp, familiarly known as "Guardy." He is a sturdy aristocrat, eighty years of age, gouty, and chairman of

the Island Navigation Company. He was rather a rake in his youth and still has a great fondness for liquor, especially port, although his physician has forbidden him to drink it. He has a straight-laced daughter who is a prominent member of a temperance society and, in Heythorp's opinion, "too holy to get married." Other dependants include the widow of his illegitimate son and her two children.

Early in the play we see him dominating a directors' meeting. He indulges in a piece of trickery for the purpose of securing an income for the family of his son. The scheme is exposed and there is nothing left for "Guardy" to do but resign. He treats himself to a fine dinner, replete with liquors, and dies soon after the banquet. Molly, the Irish servant girl whom he liked, exclaims on seeing the body, "Mother o' Jesus! The grand old fightin' gintleman! The great old sinner he was!"

The part of Heythorp has been very cleverly played by George Arliss in New York and by Norman McKimel in London.

THE SHOW

The Show is an exposition of the unfortunate results of ungovernable curiosity which pries its way into the secret affairs of private individuals and presents its findings in the public press.

Colin Morecombe is an airman who has committed suicide by shooting himself. Investigation of the case reveals that he had been living apart from his wife, that a young waitress had been

his mistress, and that his wife had been visiting another man when the suicide took place. The public is served all the details. Soon it is found that Morecombe has committed suicide because he was subject to fits of temporary insanity; feeling another attack coming on, he had resolved on suicide. These facts are communicated to a friend in a letter written just before the suicide occurred. Thus the investigation is completed, but not without causing tremendous suffering to Morecombe's widow and her lover, his mother and father-in-law, as well as to Daisy Odham, the young waitress, and her family.

The story is dramatically set forth, and the tirade against the press is unmistakable. Yet in its defense it is said that "the villain in the piece" is the public, not the press. Even Odham, Daisy's father, says, "It's human nature to want to see all there is." But the playwright makes clear that in such cases as this the curiosity is not healthy. It is a morbid desire to consider somebody else's misfortune as a show to be greedily enjoyed and gossiped about.

ESCAPE

Galsworthy has declared that Escape, written in 1926, is to be his last play, as he desires to devote his attention exclusively to novel writing. It deals with a familiar theme--the clash between the individual and modern machinery for the administration of justice. It consists of a prologue and nine episodes.

The prologue discloses a conversation between Matt Denant and

a girl, who is loitering in Hyde Park for professional purposes. Matt, a war hero, is rather amused by the girl's talk and is just walking away when a plain clothes man appears to arrest the girl. Matt interposes, maintaining that she is innocent, and in attempting to defend the girl he engages in a scuffle with the officer. The plain clothes man is knocked down, and as he falls his head strikes against an iron rail, causing his death. Matt is taken into custody.

Episode One reveals Matt on the prison farm talking to a fellow convict. "The poor blighter was dead," he says, "and I got five years for manslaughter." He has three more years to serve and resolves to attempt an escape. He is warned that it is extremely dangerous, but he manages it. The succeeding episodes show him seeking refuge from his pursuers. Finally, when he is being screened by a clergyman, he steps forth and gives himself up rather than require the parson to lie for his sake.

Sympathy is with Matt throughout. He is an intelligent, appealing fellow who, through the exercise of his natural chivalry, finds himself in a serious predicament. It seems as though he had not deserved a prison sentence. Hence we do not blame him for escaping. It is to be noted, also, that the intelligent people whom he meets after his escape all sympathize with him and try to insure his safety. When at last he has acted nobly to save the parson from a difficult situation, he says, "It's one's decent self one can't escape." And the parson replies, "Ah! that's it! God keep you!"

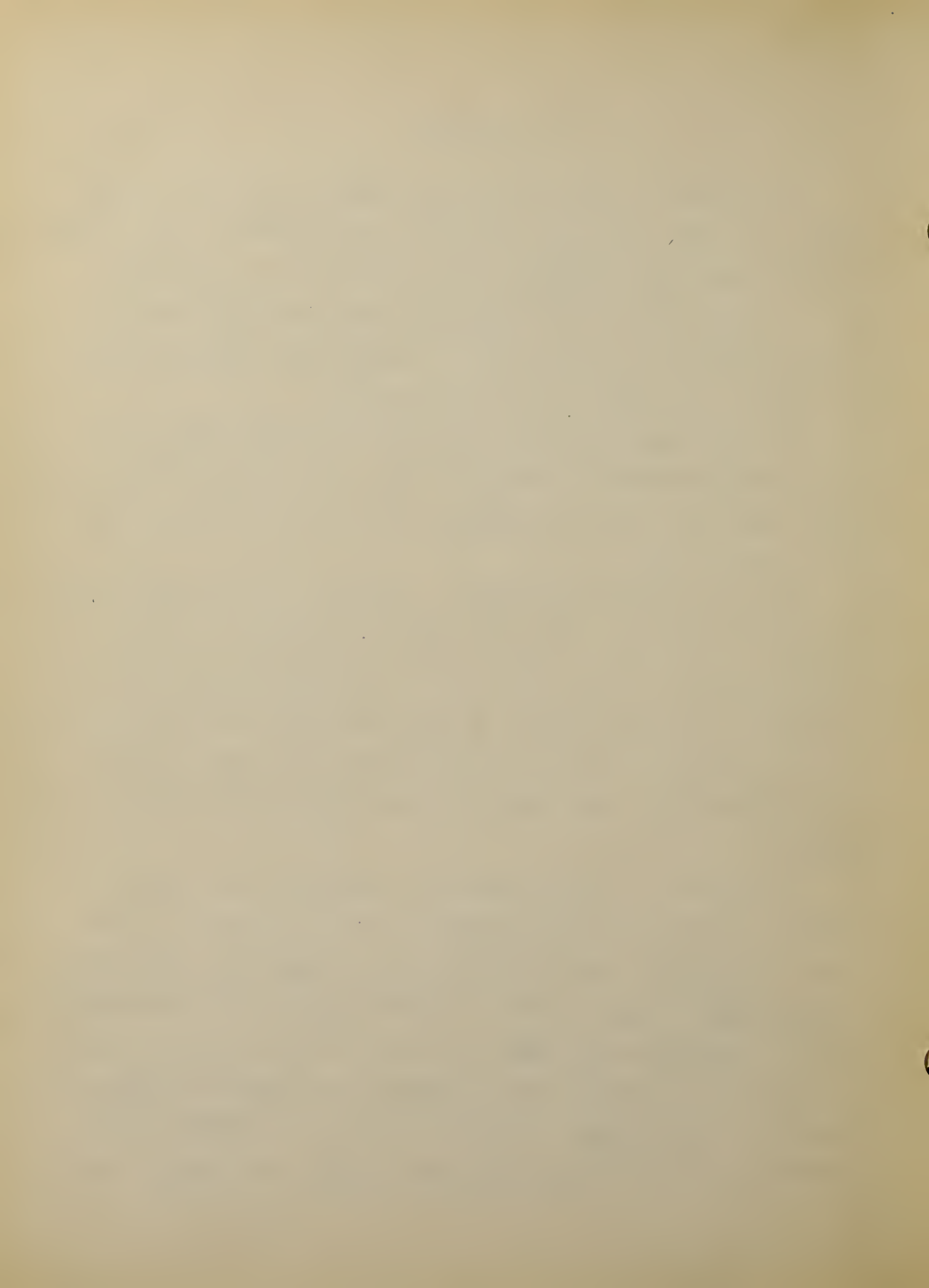
III. SUMMARY

Galsworthy's playwrighting career covers a period of twenty years, from 1906, when The Silver Box was produced, to 1926, which saw the appearance of Escape. The nineteen dramas, apart from one-act plays, which he had published during that time reveal a keen interest in the social life of his time and a sincere effort to awaken a realization of its deficiencies.

The essay entitled "Some Platitudes Concerning Drama" sets forth the playwright's theories of drama. He maintains that a drama must have a spire of meaning, and his chosen technique is that of naturalism.

The faithfulness with which he practiced his theories is well revealed in his plays. They are well-made and reveal a fine dramatic sense. It is apparent that Galsworthy possesses the sensitive soul of the artist and the ardent zeal of the reformer. His deep sense of pity and sympathy for the unfortunate prompts him to plead their cause through the forceful medium of social drama.

What causes of social unrest are exhibited in the plays? There is, first of all, an exaggerated personal egoism. We see this in The Silver Box, The Eldest Son, The Skin Game, The Forest, A Family Man, and Joy. There is likewise a group self-centredness, shown in The Mob and The Show. We find the abuse of power resting in the hands of leaders, such as Anthony and Roberts in Strife and Weythorp in Old English. We should note also the unfair administration of justice in The Silver Box, Justice, and Escape. Another



cause of misery is a lack of appreciation of the social organism as a whole. Strife and The Foundations may be cited as examples. Lastly, there is the very prevalent lack of sympathetic understanding which is so repeatedly stressed in The Pigeon, Windows, Joy, Loyalities, The Fugitive, The Mob, A Bit o' Love, The Show, Strife--indeed it seems that we can find evidence of it in every play. It is this, a lack of imaginative sympathy, that Galsworthy especially deplures. Over and over his wiser characters plead for love and kindness. "Therr bain't nothin' in life, yu know," says Mrs. Jenmy, "but a bit o' lovin'!"

The fundamental weaknesses of human nature, then, form the subject matter of Galsworthy's dramas. Such material is of universal appeal in all ages. It is probable that Galsworthy's excellent social studies may be accorded a permanent place in English literature.

Galsworthy, John

Plays (continued):

The Little Dream, 1911
The Pigeon, 1912
The Eldest Son, 1912 (wr. 1909)
The Fugitive, 1913
The Mob, 1914
A Bit o' Love, 1915
The Foundations, 1917
The Skin Game, 1920
A Family Man, 1921
Loyalties, 1922
Windows, 1922
The Forest, 1924
Old English, 1924
The Show, 1925
Escape, 1926

Charles Scribner's Sons

Henderson, Archibald

Changing Drama
Henry Holt and Co., 1914

Lewisohn, Ludwig

The Modern Drama
B. W. Huebsch, 1915

Moderwell, Miram H.

Theatre of Today
John Lane Company

Morgan, A. F.

Tendencies of Modern English Drama
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924
Pages 121-138

Nicoll, Allardyce

British Drama (Chapter on Domestic
Tragedy and the Problem Play)
Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1925

Thelps, William Lyon

Essays on Modern Dramatists, p. 99-141
Macmillan, 1921

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