THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ESTIMATES OF
GALSWORTHY AS A NOVELIST

by

Elizabeth Webster Watson

A Thesis
submitted to the faculty of the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Graduate College
University of Arizona

1937

Approved: [Signature]  May 17, 1937
Major Professor  Date
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE PRE-WAR GALS WORTHY</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE POST-WAR GALS WORTHY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE HONORED GALS WORTHY</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE PERMANENCY OF GALS WORTHY</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

John Galsworthy once said that he considered himself, first and foremost, a novelist, and that if he had to choose between novel-writing and play-writing, he would give up the latter.\(^1\) It would appear, then, that it is as a novelist that Galsworthy would have wished his fame to endure. Only four years have passed since his death. A long backward look we cannot take, but we can study the writings of contemporary critics to find the account of his fame as it grew during his lifetime and as it has survived his death. Beyond that, we can learn what these same critics suggest for his future reputation, the status of his permanent place in the field of novelists. This thesis will use the opinions of both English and American critics.\(^2\)

Let us examine, first, the field for the critics. John Galsworthy was the author of nineteen novels, written over a period of thirty-five years. His first work was *Jocelyn*, published in 1898; his last, *One More River*, finished in 1932, shortly before his death. On the occasion of the American publication of Galsworthy's collected works

---

\(^1\)"Mr. John Galsworthy," *Outlook*, G (1912), p. 608.

\(^2\)The great vogue of Galsworthy's novels on the continent of Europe will not be discussed. Andre Chavrilbon will be the only continental critic quoted, and he only in this introduction.
in 1908, the author stated that he preferred to have the public forget his early experiments in writing, and omitted Jocelyn from the collection. The second, Villa Ruben, he included in its rewritten form, as his first recognized novel. This is a simple story of an English girl, living abroad, beloved by Herr Harz, an artist and an anarchist. As an introduction to Galsworthy novels, it promises nothing exceptional. In it, however, we find his first "radical" hero and a good characterization of a Mr. Nicholas Treffrey. The latter is a wealthy retired business partner of a certain Forsyte. Treffrey dies in this book; otherwise, one feels that he could have gone on straight into The Forsyte Saga and been James' or Jolyon's associate.

The Island Pharisees followed in 1904. Not a simple story at all, it is clearly a criticism of the upper middle class English society, being the first of fourteen novels that are definitely descriptive of upper middle class or aristocratic family groups. Later, in 1913, reviewing The Freelands, a critic says:

In his new novel Mr. Galsworthy adheres to the method successfully followed by him in other works of illustrating social changes and the evolution of public opinion mainly within the compass of a family group.

The Island Pharisees is one of those "other works". The

---

"evolution of public opinion" in this book concerns the worship of conventionality, strong in certain of the characters, their organized philanthropy, and the lack of spiritual union in many marriages. Chronologically, The Man of Property, the well-known first book of The Forsyte Saga comes next. The Country House follows, describing the home life of a landed Englishman, a country squire. Social problems similar to those discussed in The Island Pharisees appear again, with the addition of divorce. Fraternity appeared in 1909. Here Galsworthy tells the story of the Dallisons, cultured families of two brothers, and of a group of the poor to whom the former are trying to be philanthropic. The harm that can be done when the wrong people take up philanthropy is the main social problem involved. The Patrician (1911) is a story of the aristocratic Carodoos. Their class distinction and loyalty, their devotion to public affairs—all are pictured clearly. The love story involves another criticism of the divorce laws of England.

The Dark Flower (1913) is of a different type, being the first of three "novels of love." It presents nothing more nor less than a careful analysis of the emotional life of its hero, Mark Lennan, from his nineteenth year through his full maturity.

The Freelands (1915), as has been pointed out, is one
of the family group novels. The new social problems discussed are those of the land and of the decadence of farm labor.

Then follow the two other love novels, Beyond in 1917 and The Saint's Progress just after the war in 1919. The latter deals with the war's influence upon religion and morals.

In 1920 and 1921, respectively, In Chancery and To Let appeared, finishing the great trilogy, The Forsyte Saga, which traces the family history of the propertied Forsytes through the Victorian epoch and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Galsworthy wrote six more novels before his death. These also developed into trilogies; the first, A Modern Comedy, composed of The White Monkey, The Silver Spoon, and Swan Song, continues directly the story of the younger generation of Forsytes up to the death of old Soames. The last trilogy was called The End of the Chapter. Its three books, Maid in Waiting, Flowering Wilderness, and One More River, were published in 1931, 1932, and 1933. Forsytes are present only in the background, the main characters being relatives by marriage of Fleur Forsyte, the aunts, uncles, and cousins of her husband, Michael Mont. Galsworthy spoke of these characters in a letter to his friend Andre Chevrillon:

I have started on another family, the Charwells (or Cherrells as it is pronounced) representatives
of the older type of family with more tradition and sense of service than the Forsytes. . . . .
It's a stratum (the Service-manning stratum) that has been much neglected.  

To summarize the family novels, the following paragraph from the critical study of Chevrillon will serve our purpose well:

Behind the Forsytes, this reader will see the upper middle class townsfolk, the parvenu of the nineteenth century, conspicuous for their respect for money, their intolerance and snobbishness; behind the Pendyces (The Country House), the old Tory gentry of the counties, the ancient caste, the despotic fox-hunting justices of the peace, patrons from father to son, of the small rural population; behind the Dallisons (Fraternity), the world of intellectuals, refined and sensitised by culture, still obedient (an essentially English trait) in spite of their delicate, reticent scepticism, to codes of Puritan origin, but to whom the religious principle has become a social imperative; finally, behind the Caradoos (The Patrician), the aristocracy, trained by a stoic discipline to a proud worship of character, traditionally devoted to public affairs, but freer in thought and action, much more independent of conventions and cant than the middle classes.  

In the same vein can be added, behind the Otherrells, again the aristocracy, well-bred but now impoverished, exhibiting the fine spirit of their race and class, and in the person of Dinny, exemplifying the finest contemporary English type.

---

5 H. V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 629-30. This is the only biography of Galsworthy and will be used throughout this thesis. Hereafter, in footnotes, it will be referred to as "Marrot".

of courage.

In these eighteen novels Galsworthy left a huge gallery of English portraits, vivid, in a vital English scene. The truth or falsity of these characters, and the greatness of them, and the sentiments they voice and the way they meet the social problems of their day—all these things, with, of course, matters of the novelist's technique, form the basis for the critics' comment. An indication, at least, of the way they judge is shown by the following accumulated figures. Considering forty-odd critical articles published in such English and American periodicals as The Spectator, New Statesman and Nation, Bookman, North American Review, etc., articles of some length, dealing with Galsworthy, the novelist, generally, not with individual books in review form, the writer finds that approximately twice as many English criticisms are written in praise of Galsworthy's novels as are written against them; and that the same percentage of favorable comment is present in American critiques. As for book reviews, a study of the plus and

7 The figures used were compiled without reference to critical comments in Marrot's biography. Marrot had access, of course, to much more material—especially English periodical literature. His conclusions and judgments are quoted freely throughout the thesis, but in this particular matter are not used. The decisions, therefore, as to whether critiques are favorable or unfavorable are decisions of the writer of this thesis, having been made after reading carefully and entirely the critical articles.
minus signs opposite the reviews of Galsworthy's novels since 1913, recorded in the Book Review Digest, reveals that in England two favorable reviews were published to each unfavorable one. In America the percentage was four to one. Those in both countries rated as plus-minus and minus-plus show the same ratio as those definitely for or against.

Another trend of criticism, seen at a glance, is that made by the list of men and women with whom Galsworthy is compared or contrasted by critics. Thirty-eight names appear upon it. Some are used repeatedly; others mentioned but once.

Galsworthy is favorably compared with Thackeray by five critics, who say that the two novelists' subject material is similar and their treatment of it equally excellent. The first of these comparisons was made as long ago as 1908, when Galsworthy was called the modern Thackeray. In 1933 an article appeared which contrasts the two, saying Galsworthy has failed to create characters of the same vitality as Colonel Newcome and Becky Sharp.

---

8"Vital Literary Art of John Galsworthy," Current Literature, XLV (1908), p. 408. The other references:
"End of the Forsytes," Literary Digest, XCVIII (1920), p. 27.

In 1908 Galsworthy was also said to be carrying out the Dickensian tradition, but later (1925) he is contrasted with Dickens. Galsworthy's spirits are said to be not so high as Dickens'. Another critic, writing after Galsworthy's death, says that the two novelists were both so vitally interested in correcting abuses, something absolutely outside their art, that they stand together as direct opposites to Jane Austen and Henry James, who were thoroughly detached and concentrated artists. Continuing, the critic says that a contrast between Galsworthy and Dickens is obvious in their character delineation. Dickens' gift is for the grotesque; Galsworthy's for the commonplace. The critique concludes with the statement that Dickens' caricatures are alive while Galsworthy's photographs are not.

S. Stephenson Smith, in his book, The Craft of the Critic, says that Galsworthy is like Fielding in that they both attempt to reach an ideal English compromise between the freedom of the saga and the tightness of the art novel.

Henry Seidel Canby, a critic for The Saturday Review

---

of Literature, wrote an article after the novelist's death in which he endeavors to explain Galsworthy's superiority over the cleverer George Bernard Shaw and Arnold Bennett and the more worldly H. G. Wells and Sinclair Lewis by saying that Galsworthy had a "grasp of the moral theme of England under industrialism." This statement he bolsters by likening Galsworthy to ten great men, saying that he was as liberal and intellectual, as aristocratic and proud, as sensitive and humanitarian as Edmund Spenser, George Herbert, Joseph Addison, Matthew Arnold, Edward Fitzgerald, Horace Walpole, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Woodrow Wilson. ¹⁴

Galsworthy is compared to the poets, Shelley and Swinburne, by a critic who says that the novelist feels as deeply as Swinburne, and like Shelley is possessed with fierce moral indignation. The same writer says that Galsworthy has the restraint of Walter Pater without his hopelessness.¹⁵ In 1908 Galsworthy was termed "Sargent's half-brother in the arts."¹⁶ Four years later a critic said that in Galsworthy's pictures of English society, found in The Man of Property and The Country House, his

disapprobation is as visible as is Sargent's in his paintings. 17

An article in The Atlantic Monthly (1916) states that Galsworthy is without the crackling smartness of Gilbert Chesterton and the mannerism of Henry James. 18 Frederic Cooper in his criticism of Galsworthy says that The Patrician is so identified with the method and material of Victorianism that it could have been written by Mrs. Humphrey Ward. 19

Galsworthy came to the foreground soon after Meredith and Hardy. Naturally the qualities in the novels of the three writers are often compared or contrasted. Several critics think Galsworthy's brilliancy and delicacy are like Meredith's, but without Meredith's heartening quality. 20 None of the critics offer Galsworthy anything but unfavorable contrast to Thomas Hardy. One says that in the field where Hardy is as a Shakespeare, Galsworthy is only the Beaumont and

20 Dorothy Martin, "Mr. Galsworthy as Artist and Reformer," Yale Review, XIV (1924), p. 136.
Robert B. Chambers, his Fletcher.21 Writers of criticism are for the most part agreed that Galsworthy is extremely dissimilar to his contemporaries, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, James Matthew Barrie, and Arnold Bennett. They say that he has not the virility of Wells and Bennett nor even of the fanciful Barrie.22 They say he is not as facile nor as clever as Bennett. Shaw's cleverness, too, he lacks.23 Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, makes a comparison, saying that Galsworthy is like Wells and Bennett in his materialism,24 and R. A. Scott-James remarks that Galsworthy and Shaw in their criticism of society expand a similar doctrine (an effort to make people get away from the rigid adherence to the conventional way of doing things).25 Both Shaw and Wells are termed far superior to Galsworthy in artistic power by Rebecca West.26 One critic was glad that Gals-

worthy had chosen English society for his subject, since it is, consequently, surer to have a fair portrayal than it is receiving from the pens of Wells, Shaw, and Bennett, and, also, than American life is having from Sinclair Lewis' pen.27 Galsworthy, according to another article, is like Sinclair Lewis in only one respect, his unpopularity at home.28

This list would be incomplete without a record of the comparisons and contrasts which are made by critics between Galsworthy and continental writers. They say he has Zola's strength29 and Balzac's sincerity and scope.30 One states that Galsworthy and Balzac are the only two novelists who take the business of property seriously enough to be able to write of it correctly.31 Tolstoi, whom Galsworthy much admired, the critics agree is an eminently greater novelist than his disciple. War and Peace blazes the trail for The

---

28"Mr. Galsworthy's England and Mr. Lewis's America," Bookman, LXXVI (1933), p. 48.
Forsyte Saga but cannot be compared with it.\textsuperscript{32} Another contrasts Galsworthy with Dostoyevsky, saying that the reader of the Englishman's work does not receive the intellectual stimulus given by the latter's writing.\textsuperscript{33} Galsworthy reminds the critic, Edwin Bjorkman, of the great Scandinavian writer, Ibsen. The critic says that the two are both interpreters of modernity.\textsuperscript{34}

It is a far and interesting cry from being likened to Shelley and to Mrs. Humphrey Ward, from being compared to Swinburne and to Jonathan Edwards, but, taken all together, these many comparisons and contrasts show how Galsworthy, the novelist, is treated by the critics of his own time—how he is praised, how blamed.

With the field and the subject thus introduced, the body of the thesis will carry on a more detailed study in four chapters. The first will deal with the pre-war Galsworthy, endeavoring to establish the general position to which his fame had carried him by the end of that period. Chapter II, "The Post-War Galsworthy," will show the change

in critical feeling toward him so noticeable during the decade following 1918. The third chapter, "The Honored Galsworthy," will tell of many honors which came before his death and the simultaneous lack of enthusiasm expressed by his native England. This chapter will also give an account of his American vogue. The last chapter will present a more specific study of one work, *The Forsyte Saga*, reputedly his finest creation, to try to show all that the critics can promise for its permanency.
CHAPTER I

THE PRE-WAR GALSWORTHY

"Of Galsworthy, more than of most men, it is true to say that the story of his life lies in his work."¹ And since we are interested primarily in this work, his writings, we need only the knowledge of a few outstanding facts in his biography, those which formed the background of his literary career.

Wilbur Cross, in The Yale Review, begins a biographical sketch of John Galsworthy as follows:

Galsworthy was born a Forsyte with a silver spoon in his mouth. His father descended from a long line of farmers, who had lived for generations in South Devon on the edge of the sea. Over the border in Dorset dwelt the imaginary Forsytes. Similarly his mother belonged to a family long settled in Worcestershire, whose country side is described in "The Freelands".

Continuing, Mr. Cross tells that Galsworthy was born in 1867 in Coombe, in Surrey. His father was fifty years old when the son was born, and though he must always have seemed an old man to the boy, he was most alert. At eighty he was still active in his London legal practice. Mr. Cross compares him to that liberal Forsyte, Old Jolyon (for whom, indeed, he was the model), asserting that he had

¹Marrot, preface, p. iii.
the same "chin and jaw" indicating tenacity, and that the
"possessive instinct was strong within him." He was to a
considerable degree artistic, loving music and painting,
seeing beauty in poetry and in the English countryside.²
Of this father, the novelist wrote in A Portrait: "The soul
of Balance. He knew its tranquil secret, and where he is
there must it still be hovering."³ Galsworthy's mother,
Blanche Bartleet Galsworthy, was not a great influence in
his life. There was a certain lack of "speculation in
her soul" which the novelist regretfully said always pre­
vented any spiritual intimacy. "What a pity for me," he
concluded.⁴ Her literary portrait is the character, Frances
Freeland, that slightly eccentric, fastidious, determined,
unselfish little old lady of The Freelands.⁵

From the age of fourteen to nineteen, Galsworthy was a
school boy at Harrow. He then attended New College at
Oxford, where after three years he took a law degree, having
prepared to follow his father's profession. There are no
records to show any particular brilliance in study, but he
was earnest and steady. We have his own words for his subse­
quent legal career: "I read . . . in various chambers,

³R. H. Mottram, "John Galsworthy," New Statesman and
Nation, V (1933), p. 123.
⁴Marrot, pp. 57-8.
⁵Marrot, p. 455.
practised almost none at all and disliked my profession thoroughly." As there was no necessity for his earning a livelihood in a legal practice, it was easily abandoned.

The next two years were spent in travel. Mr. Gross speaks of the value thus accrued to the literary career Galsworthy was to enter:

Galsworthy's contact with many civilizations led him to question the whole range of the English social order as fixed in law and conventions by the Victorians. If a man is to become an author, he has several times said, a narrow selfhood must lose itself in the soul of the world. Galsworthy and Conrad, each in his own way, won their freedom of outlook in lands beyond the sea. Galsworthy was thereby saved from becoming a Soames Forsyte.

Galsworthy was twenty-seven years old before the thought of writing as a profession ever came to his mind, and, as he said, "Then it didn't occur to me; it occurred to one who was not then my wife. 'Why don't you write?' she said; 'You're just the person.'" Mrs. Galsworthy was his inspiration from the beginning; "and to that stimulus were later added the care and sympathy of his sister Lilian and his friend Conrad." Of his early writing, Galsworthy said: "I was writing fiction. . . . for five years before

---

8 Marrot, p. 135.
9 Marrot, p. 107.
I could master even its primary technique."¹⁰ In his Nobel Prize Address, his last piece of writing, Galsworthy said that for eleven years he made not one penny from his writing.¹¹ These years took him to 1906, to the publication of The Man of Property. He had spent three years writing that particular novel, but, as he said, "It was 'written'. My name was made: my literary independence assured: and my income steadily swollen."¹²

As has been pointed out in the introduction, the criticism of Galsworthy's novels will be considered in three main divisions, based on periods, not only of time, but also of critical feeling. The first, the pre-war period, will include the first fifteen years of his writing, from Villa Rubein to The Freelands. The available material is limited during the first years. The University of Arizona library has in its stacks thirty-three general periodicals going back as far as or farther than 1900, the year of Villa Rubein's publication, and thirty-five back to 1904 when The Island Pharisees appeared. Six of the thirty-five are English publications; the rest American. Of these magazines seventeen were to carry lengthy critical articles about Galsworthy

¹¹ Marrot, p. 132.
¹² Marrot, p. 135.

Later biographical facts will be included as they bear upon his later literary career.
in years to follow, but up to and through the year, 1904, only one piece of Galsworthy criticism could be found in these sources. Mr. Marrot, however, in his biography, gives some information concerning the early criticism, so that our study may start at the beginning of Galsworthy's career.

The criticism of Galsworthy's novels of the pre-war period points out, first of all, a steadily improving art. By this term we mean a growing mastery of matters of technique, a developing style. Craftsmanship is the word often used by critics. Another phase of his artistry, involved, is his interpretation of beauty, through description, characterization, and choice of words, an interpretation which came to be more and more appreciated in these first years of his growing fame.

The criticism of the first two Galsworthy novels points out many weaknesses. The press is meagre for Villa Rubein. An English journal, The Academy, says only one thing about the artistry of the book, that the author has a "clean, nervous style and an eye for character." Mr. Marrot quotes one other brief notice, not giving its source, which reports Villa Rubein an interesting but immature work. When The Island Pharisees came out (1904)

13Marrot, p. 124.
14Marrot, p. 125.
there still appears to have been no great enthusiasm. Mr. Marrot, after reporting that forty-three papers had published notices, said that the chief faults they found with the book were that it wasn’t a novel at all; that it suffered from over-emphasis; that the characters were bores; and that art had been sacrificed to propaganda.\footnote{Marrot, p. 160.}

In 1908 there appeared an article in Current Literature whose title shows the beginning of the upward trend of fame, for it was called The Vital Literary Art of John Galsworthy. In it he is termed "that promising young English novelist." The critic states that the publication of *The Man of Property* and *The Country House* has at once placed their author among the masters of the modern novel. By this time Galsworthy had been called the "modern Thackeray", the "continuator of the Dickensian tradition," and Sargent’s "half-brother in the arts," but this critic considers that the novelist’s "powerful art is altogether too individual for any such characterization."\footnote{XLV, p. 408.} In Edwin Bjorkman’s critique, published in 1911 in *The Review of Reviews*, the following statements are found:

(Galsworthy) is first of all an artist. . . . . Few living writers equal Galsworthy in the art of producing real human creatures. . . . . (He) is still young—only forty-four years of age. So
far his career has been one of steady growth. If he goes on, along the same path, with the same speed, we can surely expect extraordinary things from his pen in the future.\textsuperscript{17}

In that same year William Marion Reedy (editor of the \textit{London Mirror}) hails \textit{The Patrician} as "one (book) in a thousand, a truly beautiful work of consummate literary artistry."\textsuperscript{18} Joseph Conrad, also, is enthusiastic about \textit{The Patrician}, praising its artistic beauty in a letter to his friend, the author.

\begin{flushright}
Capel House, Orlesstone, nr. Ashford.
\end{flushright}

Dearest Jack,- Of course it isn't pure aesthetics. . . . but even on that ground alone you have done a very fine thing. \textit{There are passages and pages which have an unalterable beauty. . . . .}

\textbf{The woman of the story is just what she should be, I think, with her somewhat mysterious attraction and a sort of shadowy beauty.} I consider her a great evidence of your artistic sense. . . . .

\textbf{Upon the whole the novel is not so large as \textit{Fraternity}; it hasn't got the profound intimacy of feeling of \textit{The Man of Property} and perhaps less suggestiveness of \textit{The Country House}. In technique, in mastery it is superior to them all.}

J. Conrad.\textsuperscript{18}

In \textit{The Dark Flower}, the critics again find evidence of Galsworthy's increasing success as a creator of beauty in writing. An article in \textit{The Independent}, after saying that in this book the author has tried to hold his readers'
attention through three hundred pages of a man's "love life, unrelieved by a single chapter of his work life, or a single episode not bearing on the main theme," adds that the success attained is owing to the "beauty and richness of the fabric of words he has woven about his central motive." 19

Sir A. Quiller-Couch, critic for the London Daily Mail, seeing nothing of virtue in the subject matter of The Dark Flower, only allows it one grace, "Mr. Galsworthy's delicate writing." 20 Louise Collier Willcox is the writer of an article, criticising John Galsworthy, which appeared in 1915 in The North American Review. In it she calls him the "greatest prose impressionist of our generation," endeavoring to account in part for that fact as follows:

In The Dark Flower John Galsworthy tells an incident of a mother who took her nine-year-old boy out to see the sunset. She pointed to it, and said: "That is beauty, Jack; do you feel it?" One cannot but believe that this happened to the author himself, and that such an incident, coupled with a valuable inheritance, may have helped to lay the foundation of his extraordinary penetration into the beautiful—in life, in nature, in humanity, and in morals. 21

The Atlantic Monthly published a series of articles called Contemporary Novelists, written by Helen Thomas Follett and Wilson Follett. The one on John Galsworthy appearing in December, 1916, contains statements pertinent

---

20 Harrot, p. 361.
to our discussion of his improving art:

He has proved more conclusively than anyone else now writing fiction that English prose can be unmistakably modern without having to be either ugly or cold. . . . . His novels are almost certainly better literature than those of anyone else now writing novels, if one judges them apart from this triumphant greatness which belongs to the immortals. In artistic dignity, every one of them since The Island Pharisees is a masterpiece.

As a summary of all these books, save The Freelands, the critique of Frederic Taber Cooper, written in 1912, will serve well. Mr. Cooper begins his article by giving what he calls the obvious facts about Galsworthy's position in literature at present, saying that the novelist is still a young man, that he has produced six novels which have received "much discriminating praise, and little, if any, serious censure," and that he has been hailed as one of the leading apostles in England of the new school of fiction.

The development of his ideas of Galsworthy's improving artistry is quoted in part below:

In the first place, it may be conceded that the author of Fraternity has come to be a craftsman of high order. . . . . He seems to have known by instinct, from the beginning, certain principles of good construction which many another novelist of importance has acquired slowly and gropingly. . . . . He has an admirable sense of proportion; he never wastes time or space on minor characters or unessential descriptions. He possesses, beyond any other English novelist of the younger generation, that invaluable gift of making every little detail of character, every separate brush-stroke...
of his minutely careful backgrounds convey something essential to our comprehension of his story as a whole.

Furthermore, Mr. Galsworthy started, not only with a certain intuitive knowledge of technique, but with what is still more valuable, an unusual power of self-criticism. His published volumes, taken in chronological order, disclose most significantly his aptitude for learning, his ability to see the weak points in his structure and to avoid them in subsequent productions.

Then follows a consideration of each novel. *Villa Rubein* is passed over as but a pleasant story with little plot. Mr. Cooper says that it is generally admitted that *The Island Pharisses*, as far as construction is concerned, is the weakest of all Galsworthy's books and the one with the thinnest plot. It merely chronicles the experiences of a young man, disgusted with the self-complacent social group of which he is a member, moving on to other social circles, where the same conditions seem to exist. The critic says that Galsworthy learned from this book that a "picaresque string of episodes, with a constant procession of new scenes and new people, even when bound together by an unmistakable singleness of purpose, falls short of the higher standard of good construction," and abandoned it forever.

*The Man of Property*, Mr. Cooper thinks a skillfully performed piece of work; "the intricate interlacings and crossings of all these varied family interests are as elaborately and finely patterned as a piece of hand-made lace—but, like fine lace, they need the eye of a con-
noisseur to appreciate them." Galsworthy learned one structural truth from this book, namely "that economy of means demands that a novelist shall strive for a maximum of effect with a minimum of characters." He practised this theory in *The Country House*, limiting his group of characters to a small number, and, also, allowing limited space and time elements. Mr. Cooper thinks of this book as an example of close construction tested on a modest theme. *Fraternity* has that same close construction practised on an ambitious, world-wide theme, the Brotherhood of Man. *The Patrician* was Galsworthy's latest novel at the time this article was written, but the critic was not enthusiastic about it. It represents, in his opinion, no improvement from any point of view. The book was not without its admirers, however, as we have already seen.

William Lyon Phelps gives the final words in this treatment of Galsworthy's improving art, speaking of the last book of the period, *The Freelands*: "The first half of *The Freelands* is wholly delightful; it has all the charm of *The Patrician*, with the added effect of even maturer art."  

We take up Mr. Cooper's criticism again to start the

---


discussion of the second pronounced factor observed in the critical writing of the pre-war Galsworthy novels. This is a belief on the part of many critics that John Galsworthy is a radical writer. Mr. Cooper's remarks give an introduction to this subject:

In conclusion, there remain a few words to be said about what... may be called Mr. Galsworthy's philosophy of life. For practical purposes it is somewhat difficult to define a philosophy so largely negative and destructive as is Mr. Galsworthy's, so far as it may be read between the lines of his stories. Since he is a good artist, he usually refrains in his later books from openly expressing his personal views; and, yet, the resultant impression that one brings away from his books is, that if Mr. Galsworthy were to be asked, "What is the matter with the world?" he would answer sweepingly, "Everything is the matter!"25

The feeling that Galsworthy is radical is evident in the criticism of The Island Pharisees (1904). A writer for The Nation, discussing this book, says that the publisher, on the paper cover, calls it an "'enterprising novel' with a 'light and readable style,'" but that the reader will be much more apt to pronounce it a "lengthy diatribe against what the author calls conventions but most people call Morality."26 Fraternity was also criticised as the work of a radical writer. The Saturday Review (1909) says that in the guise of a novel, John Galsworthy has produced a very

26LXXVIII, p. 501.
dangerous and revolutionary book, that *Fraternity*

is nothing more nor less than an insidious and embittered attack on our social system. . . .
The author has in fact violated all canons of art in making his story the medium for political propaganda.27

An article in *Harper's Weekly* discusses the radical quality of Galsworthy's writings as borne out in *The Dark Flower*. An opening statement calls the novelist "very radical and very skeptical." A portion of the later discussion appears below:

*The Dark Flower*, unlike many of Mr. Galsworthy's books, has little to do with classes. It deals with a characteristic of men and women that is either a recent growth in the world, or, what is more probable, something that has been persistently ignored. It is not altogether a pleasant subject, and in the hands of one less skilled and less refined than Mr. Galsworthy it might easily be harsh. It treats four phases in the love life of a man, and, incidentally, phases in the love life of women who figure in this man's story. It is not a book for the very young, and it will pain those adults who are not able to see that the way to manage human weaknesses is not altogether the traditional English way of keeping them out of conversation. . . . Trying to stop the contemplation of such a subject is sweeping back the ocean with a broom, and it is wholesome to have forward movements guided by men of such fineness as John Galsworthy. Indeed, advance and intellectual poise ought to remain together. As Woodrow Wilson once said, the student is the natural radical.28

Our last novel of this period, *The Freelands*, also, caused criticism of this type. Of its author *The Saturday Review* says: "He is a fanatic with a very palpable axe to

27 Marrot, pp. 235-6.
grind."\textsuperscript{29} The English \textit{Spectator} is not so vehement, but says: "Mr. Galsworthy cannot be regarded as an inspiring pamphleteer, though in respect of the details of the oppression of tenants he recalls the literature of the Gladstone league."\textsuperscript{30} William Lyon Phelps is speaking of Galsworthy's entire group of pre-war novels when he says that the novelist is above all else, a satirist, that he looks upon the world with disapproval, and upon England with scorn. "His temperament is plainly radical . . . . The word Respectability makes him see red. No German has said worse things of England's hypocrisy than some of her own present-day novelists."\textsuperscript{31}

To summarize, we have so far seen a young novelist, born, reared, and living in the world of English folk whose counterparts were peopling his novels, a novelist unknown and beginning his artistic career at thirty, well-known at forty-five. Accused of writing a diatribe against conventional morality, of seeing red on the subject of respectability, he has been called a propagandist, a pamphleteer, and a writer of tracts. On the other hand, he has received high praise for the artistry of his technique and for the

beauty of his style. The fame of John Galsworthy is real and growing. Critics in England and America, alike, considered him, by the close of the pre-war period, a novelist of note.
CHAPTER II

THE POST-WAR GALSWORTHY

During the years of the Great War John Galsworthy produced little to add to his fame as a novelist. After The Frelands, which was published at the beginning of the war, only one book appeared, that, a novel of love, entitled Beyond. The insignificance of this work is evident from the fact that in none of the critical articles, which are the chief sources of material for this thesis, does even the name of the book occur. The Saint's Progress (1919), however, brought Galsworthy back for vigorous criticism, and from 1920 to the end of his life he wrote first the last

---

1 Mr. Marrot reported that Beyond sold very well; being a full-blooded love story, it was popular in the emotional tension of the war years. (p. 457). The following letter from John Galsworthy to his publisher shows that all of the criticism was not flattering. "... I haven't seen any reviews for nearly two years past, and I don't want to take up the habit again of reading press cuttings, which I think after a time becomes a bad one. As to The Saturday--always my most bitter critic--I should think the explanation lies in a protest I was moved to make to their review of The Frelands, which described me as a "revolutionary" writer. The memory of a critic is longer than a donkey's tail, and no doubt he's making his revanche.

"As to The New Statesman--they are never very friendly--why, I don't know..."

"My friends seem to like the book more than usually. Conrad, Garnett, William Archer, Masefield, Granville Barker, Hudson have all written warmly." (pp. 459-60, Marrot)
two books of *The Forsyte Saga* and then the six books of the two trilogies that followed, all novels that received the detailed consideration of American and English critics alike.

In the previous chapter the Galsworthy of pre-war years was found to be radical. The Galsworthy of this post-war period becomes more and more conservative. The critics begin to point out definite flaws in his art. They speak of his defective character portrayals. He becomes a writer with obsessions, a novelist of pessimism. His fine qualities, those noted so often by critics of the former period, have become standardized. His artistic dignity, his excellent craftsmanship, the beauty of his descriptions, once singled out for praise, are now taken for granted. Post-war criticism is prone to mention briefly at the outset that Galsworthy as a novelist possesses, of course, well-known admirable qualities, and then to launch into the main body of its texts with detailed discussions of one or another of his faults.

A favorite topic for the critics of this period is Galsworthy's power or lack of power to draw characters. There is great divergence of opinion, but in the main, the criticism is adverse. The writing of Louise Collier Willcox, which appeared in 1915 and has been quoted from before, is the starting point for our consideration of this subject. In her immensely favorable account of *The Man of*
Property, she breaks through to say, "It has one flaw, the character of Irene, beautiful, passive, led from one act to another by Fate or chance, but with no definite creative personality." Irene was to receive much criticism. Not so the other lady Mrs. Willcox chooses to describe as the "most delightful lady Mr. Galsworthy has yet drawn: Mrs. Pendyce, a woman of silk and steel," who is endowed with some courage but is still a passive soul who accepts rather than makes a life. "One is never quite satisfied that Galsworthy's women are flesh and blood,—free creative agents." A. Wyatt Tilby, in a criticism written ten years later for The Edinburgh Review, agrees with Mrs. Willcox. He goes further, saying that Galsworthy succeeds better with men than with women, attributing the fact to the novelist's pre-occupation with property. His concluding words are: "Mr. Galsworthy sees his women through the glass of property darkly, but his men face to face." Mr. Tilby's opinion of Irene is that she leaves "one cold—as cold as Agnes Copperfield or Amelia Osborne." Her beauty and her purity are evident, but she is not "quite alive." Edward Shanks, in The London Mercury, presents an opposite view. In speaking of Irene he says, "In her, for once, Mr. Galsworthy succeeds

in presenting a poetic, an almost mystical, embodiment of (the) spirit of liberty and beauty." Because of this achievement, in Mr. Shank's opinion, The Forsyte Saga has a "balance and completeness which no other of his books approaches." Galsworthy succeeds best, he thinks, in presenting characters whom he attacks. "With the timid, the respectable, the self-satisfied, he deals confidently and convincingly." The affectionate and laboured characterization of Soames Forsyte and the appreciative portrait of Swithin are to him splendid examples of creative art. Leaving the Saga, Mr. Shanks discusses The Dark Flower, an "unsatisfactory" book. In Anna Stormer and Olive Cramier, he can see only the ghost of Irene Forsyte crossing the scene twice. The hero, Mark Lennan, is "a failure, a stick," and Mr. Shanks goes on to say that Galsworthy's heroes generally are failures when they get to the middle of the stage. He treats his antagonists with "more curiosity and more gusto." Another critic, discussing this phase of Galsworthy's art, Joseph J. Reilly, claims that all of the characters, men and women alike, lack vitality in comparison with Bennett's characters in Old Wives' Tale. Mr. Reilly cites Annette, Soames' second wife, who seems to him only a name. However, he believes that Galsworthy's women more nearly approach reality than his men. In striking contrast to

4"Mr. John Galsworthy," VIII (1923), pp. 401-403.
Mr. Tilby's remark that Galsworthy sees his men face to face, is Mr. Reilly's statement to explain why the novelist can portray women more convincingly than men:

A certain feminine element in him... an unvirility, revealed in his style, from which Wells, Bennett, and Barrie... are free, gets in the way, and the elements that go to the making of his men fail to cohere and to harden.5

Galsworthy's obsessions are another favorite subject for the critics after the war. On this point five critical articles will be considered: first, Some Impressions of My Elders by St. John Ervine; second, a critique by W. L. George; third, the work of Mr. Shanks already referred to; fourth, Part VIII of William Lyon Phelps' series called The Advance of the English Novel; and lastly, an article by Lacy Lockert which appeared in The North American Review in 1922. Mr. Ervine's remarks form a good transition from the discussion of Galsworthy's characters, as he, also, says, "Irene Forsyte utterly eludes us," but explains the situation by showing how it is due to the novelist's obsessions. He advances the view that happiness and unhappiness are spiritual conditions, and that if a man has sufficient amounts of food, clothing, and shelter, it doesn't matter whether he is rich or poor. But he thinks that Galsworthy is not as aware of this as he might be. "Like most idealists he

attaches more importance to material things than many materialists do." He sees signs of Galsworthy spending all his energies getting details right and obscuring the general effect. In the Saga he is so busy "endowing his people with a sense of property that he occasionally omits to endow them with humanity." Hence, Irene eludes the critic, who goes on to say:

It is his sincerity and his chivalry and his pity and his sense of beauty, a little too conscious, perhaps, which, more than his powers of thought, make us read his novels. . . . These qualities tend to become obsessions in him with the result that his sense of proportion and his verity are disorganized and he is led into sentimentalities.

Mr. George's critique followed the publication of The Saint's Progress and is, on the whole, favorable. He points out flaws, but softens them by the following figure: "Mr. Galsworthy is a fine mind. All fine minds are leopards, but only fools dwell on the spots," and by saying that the book's faults arise from emotion. "Only the cold are wholly perfect." Mr. George, continuing, does not use the word obsession, though he might well have when he, also, endeavors to explain Galsworthy's character portrayal. He says:

Of course, his emotions tend to lead him to the excessive opposite of brutality. For instance, I am always malcontented by his women: Irene of The Man of Property, Audrey of The Patrician . . .

the heroine of Beyond. All these women appear weak in their loveliness. . . . He does sketch clever women, cruel, grasping women, but his heroines are always tossed by fate, broken, used. And the heroine of a novelist always represents woman to that novelist.

Concerning another Galsworthy obsession, Mr. George makes the following statement, "They (critics) say that this love for the under-dog has driven him crazy." Mr. Shanks discusses many of the problems that have "vexed the soul of Mr. Galsworthy," caste and farm labor, industrial unrest, marriage and divorce, and the fact that a wife can still be regarded as the property of a husband she no longer loves. The last he stresses particularly, calling it the "most poignant element in the best of his books." He cites its appearance in The Forsyte Saga, in The Dark Flower, and in The Patrician. And he explains, "I have laid stress on this theme. . . . because it bulks so largely in his work as to seem almost an obsession." Mr. Phelps praises The Man of Property, calling it one of the best English novels of the twentieth century, but he adds: "Yet even in this fine work occurs the obsession of Mr. Galsworthy, a marriage without love." With a related obsession Lacy Lockert is

7Marrot, pp. 463-464.
concerned in his entire article. After a paragraph in which he grants Galsworthy restraint, and a sense of form, a command of the language and ability to depict human types, the critic commences a tirade against the novelist's absorption in "individual exceptions to moral codes." He uses *The Saint's Progress* for a specific example, though he asserts that his charge is not against that novel alone. It is "not an isolated aberration. It is thoroughly typical of Mr. Galsworthy." The critic says that the novelist shares with many of his contemporaries a "total incomprehension of decent standards." This modern tendency is due in part to a natural and wholesome reaction from Victorianism.

No rebel, however, can wield the lightning unless he is himself a God; we feel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to be indeed of one piece with the work of our contemporaries, but Hardy was the Shakespeare of that school which has only a Beaumont in Mr. Galsworthy.

After a further consideration of Galsworthy's treatment of love in his novels and, lastly, of the day of Olive Cramier's suicide described in *The Dark Flower*, Mr. Lockert sums up his contempt by calling it "characteristic Galsworthy poison."

---

10The individual exception to the moral code in this novel is the love of Noel for her soldier sweetheart, Cyril Moreland. Cyril was killed in battle, and his child was illegitimate.

11"This day for which all her life had been shaping her—the day of love. . . . To grow and reach the hour of summer; all must do that—etc." (pp. 204-5)

The third element in post-war criticism applied to all of his novels. It was the evidence of his pessimism. Indeed pessimism came to be so universally attributed to John Galsworthy that in at least two books which give only the shortest of accounts of present day writers, this quality is mentioned. John Drinkwater, in his Outline of Literature, says that The Forsyte Saga demonstrates Galsworthy's essential pessimism. Burton Rascoe, in his Titans of Literature, from Homer to the Present, thus describes Galsworthy's attitude:

He saw, with some not quite warranted trepidation, a decay of pleasant manners and of a middle-class noblesse oblige which country gentlemen had adopted toward their underlings; and in this he was a bit on the wrong side of healthy sentiment and the heart of the truth.

The critics, also, make numerous mention of Galsworthy's pessimism. Mr. Tilby writes that Galsworthy has none of the "high spirits and sense of fun in Dickens and Wells," but that he, also, has not the deep pessimism of Hardy. "His spirit is not so sternly masculine and he cannot penetrate so deep. The prevalent mood is rather one of gentle resignation to the evil inherent in human society."

In The Yale Review Dorothy Martin likewise contrasts Galsworthy's

---

pessimism to that of Hardy. She says that the works of both men dwell on the trials and misfortunes of man, but that Galsworthy's novels do not "leave behind, like 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles' and 'The Return of the Native', a sense of the ultimate grandeur of human nature in the face of destiny's relentless thunderbolts." Of Galsworthy and Meredith, she says that both in their own way have "illustrated society's chastisement of pretentiousness, crudity and dulness" but that Galsworthy has "none of the boisterous, heartening quality, as of strong mountain air, by which Meredith whets the appetite for life, even when he is most vehemently critical." Galsworthy's characters have a strange passivity when face to face with "events and conditions which they hate. They have no gift of curing their misfortunes with laughter."

In speaking of the period of which he wrote, Miss Martin says that "his view is somewhat distorted by the pessimism which he has found it impossible to shake off." She quotes his own description of the later part of the Victorian era, giving an indication of his gloomy outlook:

Morals had changed, . . . . manners had changed, men had become monkeys twice removed, God had become Mammon--Mammon so respectable as to deceive himself. Sixty-four years that favored property, and had made the upper-middle class; buttressed, chiselled, polished it, until it was almost indistinguishable in manners, morals, speech, appearances, habit, and soul from the nobility. An epoch which had gilded individual liberty so that if a man had money, he was free in law and fact, and if he had not money, he was free in law
and not in fact. An era which canonised hypocrisy, so that to seem respectable was to be.  

Mr. George admits this gloom to be another of the "leopard spots." "Humour," he says, "... they won't get that from Galsworthy," and goes on to explain that the novelist is too deeply wounded by the horrors that surround him, that he suffers too much. People call him gloomy because he passionately hates certain sides of marriage, of the laws of capitalism, and exposes them to his readers. He wants reform. And he is a reformer without hope.  

C. E. Montague, in The Manchester Guardian, reviewing In Chancery gives a rather pleasant description of Galsworthy's pessimism:

"You are left unelated at the end, for Mr. Galsworthy has never been one of the happy trumpeters of mankind's adventure on earth. ... It is sombre as Gothic roofs full of choice vaulting, seen through interlaced lights and glooms, are sombre and beautiful."  

The last characteristic of the post-war criticism is its concern with his conservatism. The first inkling found that Galsworthy would perhaps grow out of radicalism into conservatism antedates our period, for it appears in the closing paragraph of Frederic Cooper's chapter on Galsworthy in Some English Story Tellers (1912). He quotes there a

---

16 "Mr. Galsworthy as Artist and Reformer," XIV (1924), pp. 132-6.
17 Marrot, p. 465.
18 Marrot, p. 499.
statement found in *The Athenaeum* in a review of *The Patrician*, saying that the book might have been written by Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Mr. Cooper's comment is: "It does seem rather a handicap for an apostle of the new school of fiction to have his latest work already identified with the materials and method of the Victorian era." Edward E. Hale in 1915 also has views on the subject. He says that in earlier years Galsworthy had seemed very modern, that he was always pressing upon his readers the differences between old and new ideas, between radicalism and conservatism, between liberty and authority. In his later books, Mr. Hale does not see so much of this. Galsworthy seems to him to have mellowed with the passing of time. He is losing some of his irony and becoming broader in his sympathy. R. A. Scott-James in *The Spectator* in 1933, just after Galsworthy's death, gives a long account of the change:

I, for one, respect John Galsworthy none the less because he retained in this modern period a character and attitude which were pre-war. . . . because, instead of moving with this age, as Shaw, Bennett, and Wells to some extent succeeded in doing, he reacted away from it—back, indeed, to a sort of Conservatism which contrasted with the Radicalism of his youth.

Mr. Scott-James continues to tell how Galsworthy had been considered one of the intellectual forwards of his day, twenty-five years before, but "in the later years he had

---

reversed the engines." He began to respect and sympathize with the old men who were striving to preserve the social standards of their more rigid age. He began to look askance at restless youth. 21 "Galsworthy the pioneer and humanist seemed to have been replaced by Galsworthy the moralist and disciplinarian." The later Galsworthy "who had looked forward so eagerly to this young, assertive, generous future, shrank back in something like horror when it came into being and took possession of the post-war world." 22

At the close of the previous chapter we saw a young novelist whose fame was growing. And now at the end of the post-war period we see Galsworthy older and more severely criticised as an artist, called a conservative, obsessed, pessimistic novelist. The next chapter will tell of his last years, of the high honors that then came to him, crowning his fame.

21 A letter to Galsworthy from Hugh Walpole in 1926, after The Silver Spoon appeared, illustrates this feeling. An excerpt follows:

... It is, of course, fierce and rather bitter, and I do hope that the last volume of the trilogy is going to show the other side of the new generation. The Marjories seem to me in a small minority, and I know so many fellows and girls under thirty who are fine and true and full of ideals, and all the better for not being hypocrites.

(Marrot, p. 579)

22 "John Galsworthy," CL (1933), p. 145. The following chapter will continue the consideration of the conservative Galsworthy in its account of the novelist's American vogue.
CHAPTER III

THE HONOURED GALSWORTHY

In the last years of Galsworthy's life many coveted honors came to him, distinctions awarded for his eminence in the contemporary field of letters. In this chapter we shall discuss these honors and the heightened waves of criticism which followed. Brief mention of the lesser honors, and of the award of the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature will precede a detailed account of the criticism. In the critiques, two factors seemed to the writer to predominate: first, that many critics had come to believe that Galsworthy had outlived his time as a writer, had become representative only of a bygone period; and second, that critics now found him more popular in America than he was in his native England, that his novels were more widely read and more deeply appreciated on this side of the Atlantic.

The honors which poured upon him came from England, America, and from Europe. Home and foreign universities gave him honorary degrees. Galsworthy received the Doctor of Laws degree from St. Andrews in 1922,¹ and the Doctor

¹Marrot, p. 520.
of Letters from Manchester University five years later. In 1929 he went to Dublin to receive the D. Litt. of that university, and in the next year he received L.L.D. degrees from Cambridge, where he was also made chancellor, and from Sheffield University. Oxford conferred upon him a Doctorate of Literature in 1931. Galsworthy had honorary degrees from two American universities, Princeton and Yale.

Societies also paid him homage with honorary offices and memberships. In 1920 he was elected a member of Athenaeum Club "honoris causa, under a special rule, as a person distinguished in literature." The Aberdeen University Labor Club wrote in 1923 to propose his candidacy for the Rectorship of the University, an honor which the novelist declined. The next year he was elected President of the Birmingham University Dramatic Society. Galsworthy gave an address as Honorary President of the Associated Societies of the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, for the American Academy of Arts and Letters, invited Galsworthy to represent English literature at the

---

2Marrot, p. 605.
3Marrot, p. 622.
4Marrot, p. 628.
5Marrot, p. 605.
6Marrot, p. 491.
7Marrot, p. 531.
8Marrot, p. 545.
9Marrot, p. 564.
Lowell Centenary Celebration in 1919. The novelist was elected a foreign honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences twelve years later.

"Galsworthy Prices Rise," headed an item in the New York Times on June 27, 1929, reporting that record prices had been paid for Galsworthy first editions at Sotheby's auction in London. A buyer had paid $4,400 for a collection which had originally cost $75. Another paid $1,050 for an unsigned copy of Jocelyn. By the middle of 1929 twice as many demands for Galsworthy first editions were being recorded as for the next most sought-after writer.

Another type of homage came to John Galsworthy in these years. Two New York Times' accounts give the information. On May 23, 1931, the paper reported that the senior class of Amherst College had voted Galsworthy its favorite author. Three years later the New England Association of Teachers of English sent out a questionnaire to selected college classes from 1900 to 1930. The findings were published in an article, Class and Campus, by Eunice Barnard. She said:

Who is the American college graduates' favorite modern author? If 542 Smith and Dartmouth

---

10 Marrot, p. 470.
12 Page 12, column 6.
13 Marrot, p. 607.
14 Page 14, column 7.
alumni can't be wrong, John Galsworthy wins the decision. Far ahead of any competitor, he is trailed by Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, Hugh Walpole, Joseph Conrad, and Sigrid Undset.16

Three truly magnificent honors came to John Galsworthy, in addition to the above. In 1918 King George offered him a knighthood, which Galsworthy asked to be allowed to decline.16 The second great honor came in June, 1929, when, with Robert Bridges, Galsworthy was awarded the coveted Order of Merit.17 The last and the greatest honor of all was the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in November, 1932. The value of the prize in that year was 172,000 kroner ($30,000),18 all of which the novelist gave to make a trust fund for the P. E. N. Club.19 Galsworthy had prepared his speech of acceptance and planned to journey to Sweden to receive the prize. The illness which prevented the trip caused his death on January 31, 1933.20

The appreciative words of an American critic, William Lyon Phelps, printed in Scribner's, and of the English

15June 24, 1934, VIII, page 4, column 3.
16New York Times, January 2, 1918, page 4, column 5. Galsworthy's reason for not wishing to accept this honor was that he believed that "men who strive to be artists in Letters, especially those who attempt criticism of life and philosophy, should not accept titles."
19Marrot, p. 644. The contribution was to promote international amity.
critic, Ralph Mottram, taken from the English journal, New Statesman and Nation, written after Galsworthy's death, indicate the high esteem in which he had come to be held as a man and a writer on both sides of the Atlantic. Mr. Phelps said in part:

"The death of John Galsworthy on January 31, coming so soon after the award of the Nobel Prize, made a profound impression.... For twenty-five years Mr. Galsworthy, by his novels and plays, has stood in the first rank of living writers. Furthermore, no one has represented more worthily the best English qualities; high seriousness, integrity, unconscious dignity, the serenity that goes with assured position. And besides that he has been a friend of mankind."

Mr. Mottram said:

Indeed; it is one of the lucky miracles of English literature that he was ever induced to write. He would, in general, in principle, so far rather keep his thoughts to himself, and act, but not talk.

Continuing, Mottram traced Galsworthy's successful literary career from the publication of his first books through to the last trilogy. He told of Galsworthy's circulation having grown to equal that of any best seller, of the record figure paid to him by the film industry, of his fathering the P. E. N. Club, of his Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize, concluding with Galsworthy's own words, describing his father in A Portrait, saying the novelist, too, was the "soul of balance."
The remainder of the criticism to be considered in this chapter is not of such an obituary nature. Four articles contend that Galsworthy had outlived his time as a writer. Chapter II of this thesis showed that Galsworthy's critics had branded him a conservative. The following criticisms reveal that this same conservatism helped to make him seem a figure important only in a former period.

The Order of Merit award caused Rebecca West to write A Letter from Abroad which was published in the Bookman in September, 1929. She begins:

It was the permanent officialdom of England which was responsible for another recent affront to persons of culture: namely, the award of the Order of Merit to Mr. John Galsworthy. It should by right have gone to either George Bernard Shaw or H. G. Wells. These are writers of artistic power greatly superior to Mr. Galsworthy, and of infinitely greater importance to their times.

Continuing, she tells of the immense popularity of Shaw in England and of the great impression Wells has made upon the minds of the majority of young and middle-aged Englishmen and adds:

It is infuriating when the Order of Merit is withheld from both the persons who deserved it, obviously for no other reason than that they were closely identified with radical movements displeasing to the permanent officials in whose hands, at the last resort, is the bestowal of such honors; and when it is given to a writer of such infinitely inferior attainments as Mr. Galsworthy.

Miss West paid her respects to Galsworthy as a man, for his integrity, his kindness, and his many benefices. "Truly,
the man is an angel," she says, "but his work is minor. It is not profound; it copies the world rather than gives an interpretative vision of it." At the close of the letter she laments the "perfectly appalling state of English criticism, which permits the older generation to lay a dead hand on the literature of today." Moreover she tells of a recent production of Galsworthy's play, *Exiled*, calling it an extremely poor play, claiming that the London theatre-going public knew it was terrible, and adding:

"But the soft-pedaling of the press... went far beyond the natural impulse of decent people to show generosity toward a man who has done better work in his time. It amounted to a declaration that such an author is entitled to have his productions indiscriminately praised forever and ever as long as he lives."

In a more kindly mood the British critic, R. A. Scott-James, wrote:

So the Nobel Prize for Literature for John Galsworthy came only just in time... He had reached that last stage of success at which a man's work has been so much read, and becomes so familiar that it is taken for granted and even looked upon as passe; and he had not yet reached that old age when a man may live quietly and hold his peace yet be universally respected as a living monument commemorating an earlier time... "I get less and less inclined to advocate anything," he wrote to me a month or two ago.

Further on in the article the critic explains that the world had drawn upon the ideas of the younger Galsworthy, assimilated them, and now had, naturally enough, become impa-

---

23 LXX (1929), pp. 91-3.
tient with the older Galsworthy who had become "a pillar of that very constitution which he himself had labored to undermine."24

Montrose Moses wrote a long appraisal of John Galsworthy for the North American Review (June, 1933) whose opening page bears further testimony to the theory that Galsworthy had outlived his time. Mr. Moses says:

It is unfortunate that John Galsworthy had, in recent years, to cope with the raucous demands of a changing taste, and of frayed and tattered nerves. The speed of life, the noise of life, the artificial stimulation of life are what we might call Anti-Galsworthian. The sensitiveness of his nature, the gentility of his breeding, the selective reticences of his observation, served in his later years to place him in an era that closed with the war.25

An anonymous critic makes statements, interesting in this connection, in The New Republic of November, 1932. He says that the Nobel Prize awarded to Mr. Galsworthy would be generally approved, pointing out, however, that it had come too late to be of great significance from a contemporary point of view. "Mr. Galsworthy," he says, "is a conspicuous instance of a writer who has outlived himself. He was one of the novelists, with Conrad, Bennett, and Wells, who gave the Edwardian period distinction in fiction."26

25"His very Excellences may be his Undoing," CCXXXV (1933), p. 537.
It would seem from these criticisms that perhaps Galsworthy had outlived his time. At all events, it is historically true that the intelligensia of England in 1932 and 1933 were wary of accepting him, and often questioned his worthiness of the Nobel award.27 And in the year previous, 1931, Desmond MacCarthy reported that Galsworthy was losing his vogue in England.28 None the less, Galsworthy still maintained, at the time of his death, a great American following. We have already seen evidence of it earlier in this chapter in the account of the minor honors accorded him. The fact that college students and graduates in this country preferred him to all other novelists indicated a popularity which was widespread. English and American critics were fully aware of this. Many discussed it and tried to account for it in 1933.

An interesting treatment of the lowering English and rising American status of the Galsworthy vogue is found in The Bookman for January of that year. The opening sentence states that the award of the Nobel Prize to Mr. Galsworthy had been "passed over by the British Press with singularly little comment." An enumeration of various English newspaper accounts follows. The London Times makes no editorial mention of the award; The Morning Post is content with a

few lines on the theme, "No living writer among us is more completely representative of English Celts;" The Daily Telegraph states that the award "accords with the fact that we no longer criticize his work, but accept it without question as the most valid assessment and interpretation of certain English types;" The Observer and The Sunday Times are silent. Of the British monthlies The London Mercury is said to be the coldest, its note being a lament that the award had not gone to Thomas Hardy. The weekly New Statesman and Nation quietly says the award is "overdue". "Janus" of The Spectator hints at an explanation of the perfunctory nature of all these comments, when he says:

But the vogue of the Forsyte Saga and the later novels is much greater on the Continent than here. . . . I once tried to explain to a Berlin luncheon party that after all old Jolyon and his brothers stood only for a limited section of English pre-war society, and Michael and Fleur for as limited a section of post-war, but I know I carried no conviction. Galsworthy's England was the only one that mattered. . . . The rest of the world, and notably America, has developed an unusually sincere appreciation for Mr. Galsworthy's novels; from them it has built up a private picture of England and the English people; and this picture, representative or not, is unacceptable to the Englishman of 1932.

The compiler of the article sees in this notion a singular parallel to the situation following the award of the prize two years earlier to Sinclair Lewis, whom critics blame for giving a distorted picture of America to the world.29

29"Mr. Galsworthy's England and Mr. Lewis's America," LXXVI (1933), p. 48.
Another reason for Galsworthy's loss of English vogue is found in The Literary Digest in an article entitled Where Galsworthy's Fame Lay. In it G. K. Chesterton's statement that Galsworthy has no solution for England's problems is suggested as a reason why the novelist was more famous outside his own country than within.  

The Saturday Review of Literature published an article which deals entirely with Galsworthy's great American vogue. At the beginning the critic, speaking of the novelist's lack of prestige at home, said:

The English speak of him as English Henry spoke of Percy of Northumberland, dead on Chevy Chase—
"Now God, be with him," said our king,
Since 'twill no better be;
I trust I have within my realm,
Five hundred as good as he."

The remainder of the criticism endeavors to arrive at the reason for Galsworthy's popularity here. The critic decides that the main debt American readers owe the novelist is embodied in The Forsyte Saga. Our British inheritance of blood and of culture has always made us interested if not, indeed, fascinated with any "strong study of racial character and personality among the English." We consider it a racial history of life parallel to our own life. "And surely," the critic concludes, "no one in our day has made greater contributions to the racial history of English

\[30\] CXV (1933), p. 40.
personality than John Galsworthy."\(^{31}\)

Stephen Gwynn in *The Fortnightly Review* (London) gives his reason for Galsworthy's cosmopolitan army of admirers. He says that Galsworthy has a "special taste for analysing and anatomising the particular qualities of his countrymen." Foreigners, Mr. Gwynn believes, feel that Galsworthy's books not only offer attractive stories, but also give intimate information.\(^{32}\) Henry Seidel Canby in *The Saturday Review of Literature* is speaking of the same thing in his *Galsworthy: An Estimate*: "There is the character of a nation and a race in the *Saga*," he says, and continues:

> Here (in America), unquestionably we, whose culture and training more than our blood, have owed so much to the English tradition— we read Galsworthy for news on a grand scale of the English character. . . . . The Forsytes are potentially Americans of the age of property who stayed at home, who never sailed for Plymouth. . . . .

Galsworthy is just dead, and America in which he was as much honored as at home, and perhaps more widely read, may well take stock of what his insight may mean to us.

The nineteenth century, liberal, progressive, hopeful, intensely possessive, was a laboratory of human nature. The books of John Galsworthy are a report of what happened in the English section. . . . . Must we live our own Forsyte Saga to its end, and wait for a John Galsworthy to tell us what it meant?\(^{33}\)

William Lyon Phelps suggests another reason for Galsworthy's fame in America:

\(^{33}\)*IX* (1933), pp. 485-7.
Although John Galsworthy is a one hundred per cent Englishman in ancestry, breeding, and education he is an internationalist. To him foreigners are human; as intelligent, even as trustworthy, as Englishmen.34

At this point, we leave the strictly historical study of Galsworthy criticism. We have seen how his novels were regarded in the more radical pre-war period and in the conservative post-war years. At the time of his death we have seen his vogue shifting ground, but by no means dead. The final chapter will be concerned with the future, with the prophecies of critics of the permanency of Galsworthy's fame as a novelist, and most particularly as the author of The Forsyte Saga.

34 "As I Like It," Scribners, XCIII (1933), p. 257.
CHAPTER IV

THE PERMANENCY OF GALSWORTHY

(From John Galsworthy to Granville Barker)

San Marcos,

January 30, 1921

Chandler.

.... I think the July Sunday at Wingstone in 1918, when it suddenly came to me that I could go on with my Forsytes, and complete their history in two more volumes with a link between, was the happiest day of my writing life. And on the whole The Forsyte Saga, when published in one volume containing The Man of Property, Indian Summer of a Forsyte, In Chancery, Awakening, and To Let, will be my passport, however difficult it may be to get it vised, for the shores of permanence.1

And when he dedicated it, he said:

To

My Wife

I dedicate The Forsyte Saga in its entirety believing it to be of all my work the least unworthy of one without whose encouragement, sympathy and criticism I could never have become even such a writer as I am.

It is clearly evident from these two expressions from Galsworthy's own pen that he considered The Forsyte Saga his finest literary achievement. The critics of England and of America agree and grant it, also, to be his only chance for permanence. A few statements from books and magazine

1Marrot, p. 497.
articles will show conclusively how the novels of the Forsyte series are considered among his writings.²

Galsworthy’s biographer, Marrot, described the publication of The Swan Song, the sixth of the Forsyte books, as a "big moment" in the novelist's life. Twenty-five years had elapsed since The Man of Property had been begun, and now at last "the coping stone was set on the majestic edifice." Galsworthy could look back over the years with pride, for "their steady endeavor had brought to birth a permanent and solid English classic.³ At this time, Hugh Walpole wrote to Galsworthy, saying:

I do congratulate you with all my heart on bringing a great work to conclusion. What a triumph to have created something that really beautifies the world and will go on doing so.⁴ Another friend, James M. Barrie, seemed to take it for granted that The Forsyte Saga is Galsworthy's greatest work, when he wrote of his pleasure and the joy of his countrymen after the Nobel Prize had been awarded. He said that in other lands there would be rejoicing, also, because

²Part of the criticism quoted in this connection followed the publication of books in The Modern Comedy Forsyte series. The general belief seems to be that the second trilogy is not quite as great as the first, and it is The Forsyte Saga, proper, that is the real basis of this chapter. Criticism following the later books is, therefore, used only when it refers back to the Saga or to the six book series as a whole.
³Marrot, p. 608.
⁴Marrot, p. 610.
Galsworthy's Forsytes are the best-known abroad of all families from this island, the only ones who could travel without passports. In fact, Barrie further said, he wasn't so sure but that Soames Forsyte could legitimately protest that the Nobel Prize should have come to him instead of to his creator.  

One might expect his biographer and his friends to speak highly of the Saga, but men who were strictly Galsworthy's critics, also, praise it above all other of his work. William Lyon Phelps in Scribners calls The Forsyte Saga and Romain Rolland's Jean Christophe the only two "era" works of high distinction in this century. He speaks of seeing, in a London morning newspaper in 1928, the headline, "Death of Soames Forsyte," and calls the incident the most gratifying compliment that any writer of our time has received. St. John Ervine, said to be Galsworthy's severest critic, calls the Saga his best work, and declared that the craftsmanship in To Let is superb, pronouncing that particular book in the series to be the most technically correct book of our time, with, moreover, a human value even greater than its craftsmanship.  

Joseph Reilly voices the general feeling in his appraisal when he says:

---

5Marrot, p. 642.
6"As I Like It," XCIII (1933), p. 125.
7Grant Overton, "Mr. Galsworthy's Secret Loyalties," Bookman, LVII (1923), p. 156.
It is with these two trilogies (The Forsyte Saga and The Modern Comedy) that Mr. Galsworthy's name is most intimately associated and on them that his reputation as a novelist chiefly rests.

He goes on, stating that the ablest and best-balanced critics of America have gone so far as to declare that The Forsyte Saga is the only present-day novel of our tongue that will last a century. The critic, Edward Shanks, writes that the Saga is immeasurably the best of all Galsworthy's works, his most weighty and "a most weighty contribution to modern literature." In the Saturday Review of Literature an anonymous critical writer says that the "monumental work by which Galsworthy will unquestionably be best remembered is The Forsyte Saga." The literary historian, John Drinkwater, in his Outline of Literature, mentions this work in his discussion of Galsworthy, saying of it: "The Forsyte Saga is the perfect shining treasure of contemporary fiction."

With this work thus established, we can now study the criticism to discover whether or not the critics think that even The Forsyte Saga can be a vised passport for John Galsworthy to his "shores of permanence."

---

We have already dealt in Chapter II with the chief faults critics ascribed to Galsworthy novels in general. There his obsessions and his pessimism, characteristics of all his writing including the Forsyte books, were discussed at length, as well as his defective character portrayal. The works of a pessimistic and obsessed writer are not necessarily doomed for impermanence, but the latter fault—in his character portrayal—is of great moment in this connection. Hence, we will now go further into the study of Galsworthy's characters.

In an address delivered at Oxford by John Galsworthy as the Romanes Lecture for 1931, he spoke of the creation of character in literature and of the bearing of characters to permanence. A few of his words follow:

Some early words in this lecture suggested that the permanence of a novel, a play, a biography depends on the vitality of the characters therein. Let us narrow this down to the novel. Very few novels outlive their own generation. . . . The few novels of old time to which we still turn with gusto are almost always those in which a character or characters have outlived their period. How far would Thackeray be known today but for Becky Sharp?12

And so comes the question: are Soames and Irene and the Jolyons, Aunt Ann and Swithin and old James big enough and vital enough to carry Galsworthy's name down many generations? Montrose Moses spends several pages of his critique

of Galsworthy discussing this problem, commencing with the statement:

His claim to whatever permanence he is destined to have rests upon this acute realization of English tradition in character.

Mr. Moses, continuing, says that there is a beneficent spirit in Galsworthy and a lovableness of nature which detract from the novelist's effectiveness of observation. His own habits of mind, high thinking, compassion and gentleness—these all become too closely identified with the characters he creates. They never have life of their own.

So as a novelist, John Galsworthy created a pattern, neat, dapper—through clipped hedges of sophistication, through paths of English tradition, straight and withstanding the pressure of change, distrusting change. There are no broad sweeps of passionate reaction in Galsworthy; there are no characters of pagan nakedness. He deals with little souls, inbred and clothed in outward fashion. . . . . Though not of the same stature, Galsworthy's sense of irony relates him to Thackeray. Yet where has Galsworthy a character to remain in mind as Colonel Newcome . . . where . . . a Becky Sharp? The Forsyte Saga is a portrait gallery of finely etched faces that are so dependent on their era that they cannot be remembered apart from it. Thus Galsworthy's excellences may turn out to be his undoing.13

Mr. Moses calls Galsworthy's characters etched portraits.

The English critic, John Sparrow, considers them but photographs. He claims that the novels have all the merits of photography and are, hence, popular; but that they also

---

have the weakness of photography—that the figures are too often simply a part of the background. They remind us of people or types we know well, but no more. The Forsytes are simply a typical middle-class English family. He adds that no one would feel inclined to say that Anna Karenina is a type. With the sole exception of Soames, all Galsworthy characters fail of more vitality than a photograph of a type. Mr. Sparrow concludes:

His strength therefore lies in background and situations where type and not characters are involved, when the implications are not personal but social.14


If this "type" character worried Mr. Sparrow and seemed to him a fault, it is interesting to contrast the feeling inspired in Galsworthy and Mrs. Galsworthy by the recognition of this same thing by readers. The following is taken from the Preface to the Memorial Edition of The Forsyte Saga written by Mrs. Galsworthy.

"And so... the Forsytes, known all over the world, liked or disliked, are accepted, believed in, known to be true. People claim them as relatives; there was a lamentable outcry at the death of Soames! I must quote a charming note received in November last, bearing a New York address:

"'Dear Mr. Galsworthy,

Thinking you may be somewhat interested, I am writing about a happening in London, where I spent considerable time a few years ago. Late one bright afternoon I walked down Haymarket. Just as I turned into Cockspur Street I came face to face with a man whom I instantly recognized as some one I knew but whose name for the moment had escaped me. It was apparent he did not recall me, and passed on. Trying to recall where and when I had met this man, I suddenly realized that I did know
Other critics agree with Mr. Sparrow on this last point and go further to declare that Galsworthy's only value is historical. Some did not think this in any way a calamity, as was the case with the first three who follow. Mr. Drinkwater simply states:

If it is true that universal history can be contained on a small scale, in the true chronicles of one family, then here we have it.\textsuperscript{15}

An editorial in the conservative London \textit{Morning Post} expresses mild happiness about this historical quality, saying that novelists serve as historians for many people. Haven't Fielding, Thackeray, and Dickens portrayed vividly for the people certain historical periods? The conclusion is that Englishmen of this day should be glad that their era is being preserved by Galsworthy and not an English Sinclair Lewis.\textsuperscript{16} C. E. Montague, in \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, considers this value in Galsworthy novels an excellent thing. He says in part:

And yet Mr. Galsworthy's vision of late Victorian England is so vivid and true that perhaps he could

\begin{flushright}
"Isn't this delightful—and quite credible? It gave the author of 'The Forsyte Saga' much pleasure to receive this kind of testimony 'out of the blue'."
\end{flushright}


\textsuperscript{16}"End of the Forsytes," \textit{Literary Digest}, XLVIII (1928), pp. 27-8.
not be so sure of touch anywhere else. He has the rare power that Lamb had to stand off a little and see the time and place of his own youth and early maturity in all the quaint curiousness that, as a rule, only accrues to such in the minds of sympathetic observers an age or two later. Mr. Galsworthy can see the London of the nineties as Thackeray in the nineteenth century saw the London of the seventeenth; the late Victorian London has not had to become an established antique in order to have its characteristic expression and atmosphere captured and fixed by the processes of art.17

Other critics, who believed Galsworthy to be in reality but a historian, see in the situation literary failure. Rebecca West thinks that it excludes him entirely from an eminent reputation as a novelist. After saying that he copies the world rather than interprets it, she adds, briefly: "The precise function of The Forsyte Saga was historical."18 Joseph Reilly, also, explains that this quality is the secret of Galsworthy's failure. After granting him the usual merits of careful craftsmanship, style, and human sympathy, Mr. Reilly questions whether these are enough to assure Galsworthy a high place in the attention of our great-grand children. Deciding that they are not, he explains:

Herein lies the secret of Galsworthy's failure to be a great novelist. In the phrase of Hazlitt and of Henry James, the "illusion of life" is wanting. At times we catch it. . . . as in Swan Song when Fleur, denied an assignation by Jon, drinks to the dregs the bitterness of humiliation. But instances such as these are rare in Galsworthy.

17Marrot, p. 499.
The critics, deeply impressed by the many-sided talents of John Galsworthy, gentleman, have been highly generous to John Galsworthy, novelist. But in treating his works they have closed their eyes to the real function of fiction, and by emphasizing the wrong things have declared in effect that that function is to provide posterity with pictures of contemporary society rather than to create the illusion of life. Thus they have established a myth that Galsworthy, painstaking, conscientious, observant, with the temper of a critic and a propagandist rather than an artist, is a great novelist.¹⁹

Montrose Moses, likewise, feels the historical characteristic of the Saga to be a fatal weakness, for he says that it may be a sad fate for a novelist but, nevertheless, The Forsyte Saga will remain but "a very vivid human document for the historian of the future."²⁰

It is evident to the reader by this time that the critics of Galsworthy, who are his contemporaries, are not ranking him as the greatest English novelist of all time. Few of them, of course, come out in so many words to rank him at all, but we have the rather definite opinions of four Englishmen, whose judgments, not all alike, give some indica-

---

²⁰"John Galsworthy: His very Excellences may be His Undoing," North American Review, CCXXXV (1933), p. 546.

It might be interesting at this time to see what Galsworthy, himself, said about the historical characteristic of his Saga. The following is quoted from page xii of the preface to The Forsyte Saga:

"But this long tale is no scientific study of a period; it is rather an intimate incarnation of the disturbance that Beauty effects in the lives of men."
tion of the present prophetic view of John Galsworthy, novelist.

J. C. Squire is the first of these men. His verdict appears in an obituary article written for the London Mercury. In it he tells of Galsworthy's honors, saying that he deserved them all as a man, for he was a saint, but not as an artist. There is a merit in the prose of The Man of Property, but that is never equalled again. In fact, Mr. Squire thinks that the reason Galsworthy had come to his high position in present day literature is not because of any achievement of his own, but because his publishers astutely brought out The Forsyte Saga as the first of the cheap omnibus books. After quoting our second critic, Desmond MacCarthy, as having said that Galsworthy was a good writer of the second class, Mr. Squire proceeds to make his own ranking. Classes are difficult to define, but if Bennett and Trollope are in the second class, Galsworthy will have to be in the third.21

John Sparrow points out reasons why Galsworthy can not be classed as either a first or third rate novelist, and relegates him to the second rank. In the first place, he says that so large a body of competent work will surely establish Galsworthy forever above writers of the third rank. But there is something about the spirit of the

21XXVII (1933), p. 388.
Saga which marks it an achievement of the second rank. Though it bears the imprint of a second-rate mind on every page, in the critic's view that is not its fatal flaw. Its great failure results from its being the impress of a common-place spirit. We have previously mentioned Mr. Sparrow's idea that Galsworthy can but remind us of types rather than people. He elaborates this view as follows:

This ability to remind us of real types is a mark of second-rate, by contrast both with first-rate and third-rate, art. . . . . He is as real as a wax-works. . . . To this degree of realism the third-rate novelist never attains. With it the first-rate novelist never rests content. He put society behind glass, and if that meant that it was never to be quite alive, it may mean also that it will escape the mortality of flesh and blood and enjoy the permanence of a collection of specimens.22

Admirers of Galsworthy may hope that the opinion of Hugh Walpole, written for The Spectator, will more nearly approach the correct view of the permanency of Galsworthy, for although he makes no extravagantly flattering estimation of the Saga's worth, he still allows it to keep a comfortable degree of distinction. In answering the question

22"John Galsworthy," London Mercury, XXVIII (1933), pp. 51-55. In this chapter we have had critics refer to the Forsytes as (1) etchings, (2) photographs, (3) wax-work figures, and (4) a collection of specimens. It might be in keeping to add Galsworthy's own words, found in the last paragraph of the preface to The Forsyte Saga (page xiii):

"If the upper-middle class. . . . is destined to 'move on' into amorphism, here, pickled in these pages, it lies under glass for strollers in the wide and ill-arranged museum of Letters. Here it rests, preserved in its own juice: The Sense of Property."
whether or not The Forsyte Saga is great literature, he says:

If by great we mean: has Mr. Galsworthy completed for his own time and generation another "War and Peace"? the answer is, of course, in the negative. Mr. Galsworthy's work is not great in that titanic sense; but if we mean by our question, is there here a work worthy of following in the fine tradition of English fiction, a proper successor in its own kind to "Clarissa" and "Vanity Fair", the Barchester novels and "Middlemarch" and "Beauchamp's Career"? the answer is, I think yes. The six books of "The Forsyte Saga" may be greater or less than these other masterpieces, but they are in the proper succession, and will, I am convinced seem so to our posterity.23

CONCLUSION

The English and American estimates of John Galsworthy as a novelist—what then are they?

We can say that in the pre-war period criticism in both countries judged his fame more or less the same. He was becoming a novelist of note, being praised highly for his art. His youthful radicalism was detected by critics here and in England alike. After the war when Galsworthy's critics were pointing out flaws in his art, he was not more bitterly blamed in one country than the other. For example, we read of three English critics accusing him of having obsessions and of two American critics. We see that his pessimism was criticised on both sides of the Atlantic as well as his character portrayal and his growing conservatism. We can make, then, no great distinction between the English and American estimates of Galsworthy as a novelist until the last years of his life, the years discussed in the chapter, "The Honored Galsworthy."

By that time he had lost much of his English vogue and gained more prestige in this country. We have discovered the reasons given by the critics for this shifting popularity: first, Galsworthy's conservatism helped to make him seem a figure important only to a former period, that
that he had outlived his time; second, he had no solution for England's problems; third, Galsworthy had built up in his novels a private picture of England and the English people that is interesting to the world in general and America in particular, but not acceptable to the Englishmen of 1932; fourth, Americans are interested in Galsworthy's novels as strong racial studies; and finally, Galsworthy, thoroughly English though he was, was also an internationalist.

As to the English and American estimates of Galsworthy's permanency--again we find the same attitude adopted by critics here and in England. All agree that *The Forsyte Saga* is his chief hope for lasting fame. All seem likewise to agree, though the English more definitely state the belief, that despite the Saga's excellences it is yet not quite enough to give Galsworthy a place in the first rank of English novelists.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Articles**


"Mr. Galsworthy's England and Mr. Lewis's America," *Bookman*, LXXVI (January, 1933), p. 48.


Townsend, R. D. "The Book Table--Among the Fall Novels," Outlook, CXXIX (October 5, 1921), p. 187.


West, Rebecca. "Letter from Abroad," Bookman, LXX (September, 1929), pp. 91-3.
