

Embassy

By

John Galsworthy

EMBASSY

Enquiring for her at tea time Soames learned that Fleur had been out in the car since two. Three hours! Where had she gone? Up to London without a word to him? He had never become quite reconciled with cars. He had embraced them in principle like the born empiricist, or Forsyte, that he was adopting each symptom of progress as it came along with: "Well, we couldn't do without them now." But in fact he found them tearing, great, smelly things. Obligated by Annette to have one a Rollhard with pearl grey cushions, electric light, little mirrors, trays for the ashes of cigarettes, flower vases all smelling of petrol and stephanotis he regarded it much as he used to regard his brother-in-law, Montague Dartie. The thing typified all that was fast, insecure, and subcutaneously oily in modern life. As modern life became faster, looser, younger, Soames was becoming older, slower, tighter, more and more in thought and language like his father James before him. He was almost aware of it himself. Pace and progress pleased him less and less; there was an ostentation, too, about a car which he considered provocative in the prevailing mood of Labour. On one occasion that fellow Sims had driven over the only vested interest of a working man. Soames had not forgotten the behaviour of its master, when not many people would have stopped to put up with it. He had been sorry for the dog, and quite prepared to take its part against the car, if that ruffian hadn't been so outrageous. With four hours fast becoming five, and still no Fleur, all the old carwise feelings he had experienced in person and by proxy balled within him, and sinking sensations troubled the pit of his stomach. At seven he telephoned to Winifred by trunk call. No! Fleur had not been to Green Street. Then where was she? Visions of his beloved daughter rolled up in her pretty frills, all blood and duststained, in some hideous catastrophe, began to haunt him. He went to her room and spied among her things. She had taken nothing no dressingcase, no Jewellery. And this, a relief in one sense, increased his fears of an accident. Terrible to be helpless when his loved one was missing, especially when he couldn't bear fuss or publicity of any kind! What should he do if she were not back by nightfall?

At a quarter to eight he heard the car. A great weight lifted from off his heart; he hurried down. She was getting out pale and tired looking, but nothing wrong. He met her in the hall.

"You've frightened me. Where have you been?"

"To Robin Hill. I'm sorry, dear. I had to go; I'll tell you afterward." And, with a flying kiss, she ran upstairs.

Soames waited in the drawingroom. To Robin Hill! What did that portend?

It was not a subject they could discuss at dinnerconsecrated to the susceptibilities of the butler. The agony of nerves Soames had been through, the relief he felt at her safety, softened his power to condemn what she had done, or resist what she was going to do; he waited in a relaxed stupor for her revelation. Life was a queer business. There he was at sixtyfive and no more in command of things than if he had not spent forty years in building up securityalways something one couldn't get on terms with! In the pocket of his dinnerjacket was a letter from Annette. She was coming back in a fortnight. He knew nothing of what she had been doing out there. And he was glad that he did not. Her absence had been a relief. Out of sight was out of mind! And now she was coming back. Another worry! And the Bolderby Old Crome was goneDumetrius had got itall because that anonymous letter had put it out of his thoughts. He furtively remarked the strained look on his daughter's face, as if she too were gazing at a picture that she couldn't buy. He almost wished the War back. Worries didn't seem, then, quite so worrying. From the caress in her voice, the look on her face, he became certain that she wanted something from him, uncertain whether it would be wise of him to give it her. He pushed his savoury away uneaten, and even joined her in a cigarette.

After dinner she set the electric pianoplayer going. And he augured the worst when she sat down on a cushion footstool at his knee, and put her hand on his.

"Darling, be nice to me. I had to see Jonhe wrote to me. He's going to try what he can do with his mother. But I've been thinking. It's really in your hands, Father. If you'd persuade her that it doesn't mean renewing the past in any way! That I shall stay yours, and Jon will stay hers; that you need never see him or her, and she need never see you or me! Only you could persuade her, dear, because only you could promise. One can't promise for other people. Surely it wouldn't be too awkward for you to see her just this once now that Jon's father is dead?"

"Too awkward?" Soames repeated. "The whole thing's preposterous."

"You know," said Fleur, without looking up, "you wouldn't mind seeing her, really."

Soames was silent. Her words had expressed a truth too deep for him to admit. She slipped her fingers between his ownhot, slim, eager, they clung there. This child of his would corkscrew her way into a brick wall!

"What am I to do if you won't, Father?" she said very softly.

"I'll do anything for your happiness," said Soanies; "but this isn't for your happiness."

"Oh! it is; it is!"

"It'll only stir things up," he said grimly.

"But they are stirred up. The thing is to quiet them. To make her feel that this is just our lives, and has nothing to do with yours or hers. You can do it, Father, I know you can."

"You know a great deal, then," was Soames' glum answer.

"If you will, Jon and I will wait a year or two years if you like."

"It seems to me," murmured Soames, "that you care nothing about what I feel."

Fleur pressed his hand against her cheek.

"I do, darling. But you wouldn't like me to be awfully miserable."

How she wheedled to get her ends! And trying with all his might to think she really cared for him—he was not sure. All she cared for was this boy! Why should he help her to get this boy, who was killing her affection for himself? Why should he? By the laws of the Forsytes it was foolish! There was nothing to be had out of it—nothing! To give her to that boy! To pass her into the enemy's camp, under the influence of the woman who had injured him so deeply! Slowly and inevitably he would lose this flower of his life! And suddenly he was conscious that his hand was wet. His heart gave a little painful jump. He couldn't bear her to cry. He put his other hand quickly over hers, and a tear dropped on that, too. He couldn't go on like this! "Well, well," he said, "I'll think it over, and do what I can. Come, come!" If she must have it for her happiness she must; he couldn't refuse to help her. And lest she should begin to thank him he got out of his chair and went up to the piano player making that noise! It ran down, as he reached it, with a faint buzz. That musical box of his nursery days: "The Harmonious Blacksmith," "Glorious Port"—the thing had always made him miserable when his mother set it going on Sunday afternoons. Here it was again—the same thing, only larger, more expensive, and now it played "The Wild, Wild Women," and "The Policeman's Holiday," and he was no longer in black velvet with a sky blue collar. 'Profond's right,' he thought, 'there's nothing in it! We're all progressing to the grave!' And with that surprising mental comment he walked out.

He did not see Fleur again that night. But, at breakfast, her eyes followed him about with an appeal he could not escape—not that he intended to try. No! He had made up his mind to the nerve-racking business. He would go to Robin Hill—to that house of memories. Pleasant memory—the last! Of going down to keep that boy's father and Irene apart by threatening divorce. He had often thought, since, that it had clinched their union. And, now, he was going to clinch the union of that boy with his girl. 'I don't know what I've done,' he thought, 'to have such things thrust on me!' He went up by train and down by train, and from the station walked by the long rising lane, still very much as he remembered it over thirty years ago. Funny so near London! Some one evidently was holding on to the land there. This speculation soothed him, moving between the high

hedges slowly, so as not to get overheated, though the day was chill enough. After all was said and done there was something real about land, it didn't shift. Land, and good pictures! The values might fluctuate a bit, but on the whole they were always going upworth holding on to, in a world where there was such a lot of unreality, cheap building, changing fashions, such a "Here today and gone tomorrow" spirit. The French were right, perhaps, with their peasant proprietorship, though he had no opinion of the French. One's bit of land! Something solid in it! He had heard peasant proprietors described as a pigheaded lot; had heard young Mont call his father a pigheaded Morning Posterdisrespectful young devil. Well, there were worse things than being pigheaded or reading the Morning Post. There was Profond and his tribe, and all these Labour chaps, and loudmouthed politicians and 'wild, wild women'! A lot of worse things! And suddenly Soames became conscious of feeling weak, and hot, and shaky. Sheer nerves at the meeting before him! As Aunt Juley might have saidquoting "Superior Dosset"his nerves were "in a proper fautigue." He could see the house now among its trees, the house he had watched being built, intending it for himself and this woman, who, by such strange fate, had lived in it with another after all! He began to think of Dumetrius, Local Loans, and other forms of investment. He could not afford to meet her with his nerves all shaking; he who represented the Day of Judgment for her on earth as it was in heaven; he, legal ownership, personified, meeting lawless beauty, incarnate. His dignity demanded impassivity during this embassy designed to link their offspring, who, if she had behaved herself, would have been brother and sister. That wretched tune, "The Wild, Wild Women," kept running in his head, perversely, for tunes did not run there as a rule. Passing the poplars in front of the house, he thought: 'How they've grown; I had them planted!' A maid answered his ring.

"Will you sayMr. Forsyte, on a very special matter."

If she realised who he was, quite probably she would not see him. 'By George!' he thought, hardening as the tug came. 'It's a topsyturvy affair!'

The maid came back. "Would the gentleman state his business, please?"

"Say it concerns Mr. Jon," said Soames.

And once more he was alone in that hall with the pool of greywhite marble designed by her first lover. Ah! she had been a bad lothad loved two men, and not himself! He must remember that when he came face to face with her once more. And suddenly he saw her in the opening chink between the long heavy purple curtains, swaying, as if in hesitation; the old perfect poise and line, the old startled darkeyed gravity, the old calm defensive voice: "Will you come in, please?"

He passed through that opening. As in the picture gallery and the confectioner's shop, she seemed to him still beautiful. And this was the first time the very first since he married her seven and thirty years ago, that he was speaking to her without the legal right to call her his. She was not wearing black one of that fellow's radical notions, he supposed.

"I apologise for coming," he said glumly; "but this business must be settled one way or the other."

"Won't you sit down?"

"No, thank you."

Anger at his false position, impatience of ceremony between them, mastered him, and words came tumbling out:

"It's an infernal mischance; I've done my best to discourage it. I consider my daughter crazy, but I've got into the habit of indulging her; that's why I'm here. I suppose you're fond of your son."

"Devotedly."

"Well?"

"It rests with him."

He had a sense of being met and baffled. Always she had baffled him, even in those old first married days.

"It's a mad notion," he said.

"It is."

"If you had only! Well they might have been" he did not finish that sentence "brother and sister and all this saved," but he saw her shudder as if he had, and stung by the sight he crossed over to the window. Out there the trees had not grown they couldn't, they were old!

"So far as I'm concerned," he said, "you may make your mind easy. I desire to see neither you nor your son if this marriage comes about. Young people in these days are unaccountable. But I can't bear to see my daughter unhappy. What am I to say to her when I go back?"

"Please say to her as I said to you, that it rests with Jon."

"You don't oppose it?"

"With all my heart; not with my lips."

Soames stood, biting his finger.

"I remember an evening" he said suddenly; and was silent. What was there what was there in this woman that would not fit into the four corners of his hate or condemnation? "Where is he your son?"

"Up in his father's studio, I think."

"Perhaps you'd have him down."

He watched her ring the bell, he watched the maid come in.

"Please tell Mr. Jon that I want him."

"If it rests with him," said Soames hurriedly, when the maid was gone, "I suppose I may take it for granted that this unnatural marriage will take place; in that case there'll be formalities. Whom do I deal with Herring's?"

Irene nodded.

"You don't propose to live with them?"

Irene shook her head.

"What happens to this house?"

"It will be as Jon wishes."

"This house," said Soames suddenly: "I had hopes when I began it. If they live in it their children! They say there's such a thing as Nemesis. Do you believe in it?"

"Yes."

"Oh! You do!"

He had come back from the window, and was standing close to her, who, in the curve of her grand piano, was, as it were, embayed.

"I'm not likely to see you again," he said slowly. "Will you shake hands" his lip quivered, the words came out jerkily "and let the past die." He held out his hand. Her pale face grew paler, her eyes so dark, rested immovably on his, her hands remained clasped in

front of her. He heard a sound and turned. That boy was standing in the opening of the curtains. Very queer he looked, hardly recognisable as the young fellow he had seen in the Gallery off Cork Streetvery queer; much older, no youth in the face at allhaggard, rigid, his hair ruffled, his eyes deep in his head. Soames made an effort, and said with a lift of his lip, not quite a smile nor quite a sneer:

"Well, young man! I'm here for my daughter; it rests with you, it seemsthis matter. Your mother leaves it in your hands."

The boy continued staring at his mother's face, and made no answer.

"For my daughter's sake I've brought myself to come," said Soames. "What am I to say to her when I go back?"

Still looking at his mother, the boy said, quietly:

"Tell Fleur that it's no good, please; I must do as my father wished before he died."

"Jon!"

"It's all right, Mother."

In a kind of stupefaction Soames looked from one to the other; then, taking up hat and umbrella which he had put down on a chair, he walked toward the curtains. The boy stood aside for him to go by. He passed through and heard the grate of the rings as the curtains were drawn behind him. The sound liberated something in his chest.

'So that's that!' he thought, and passed out of the front door.

THE DARK TUNE

As Soames walked away from the house at Robin Hill the sun broke through the grey of that chill afternoon, in smoky radiance. So absorbed in landscape painting that he seldom looked seriously for effects of Nature out of doorshe was struck by that moody effulgenceit mourned with a triumph suited to his own feeling. Victory in defeat. His embassy had come to naught. But he was rid of those people, had regained his daughter at the expense of her happiness. What would Fleur say to him? Would she believe he had done his best? And under that sunlight faring on the elms, hazels, hollies of the lane and those unexploited fields, Soames felt dread. She would be terribly upset! He must appeal to her pride. That boy had given her up, declared part and lot with the woman who so long ago had given her father up! Soames clenched his hands. Given him up, and why? What had been wrong with him? And once more he felt the malaise of one who contemplates himself as seen by anotherlike a dog who chances on his refection in a mirror and is intrigued and anxious at the unseizable thing.

Not in a hurry to get home, he dined in town at the Connoisseurs. While eating a pear it suddenly occurred to him that, if he had not gone down to Robin Hill, the boy might not have so decided. He remembered the expression on his face while his mother was refusing the hand he had held out. A strange, an awkward thought! Had Fleur cooked her own goose by trying to make too sure?

He reached home at halfpast nine. While the car was passing in at one drive gate he heard the grinding sputter of a motorcycle passing out by the other. Young Mont, no doubt, so Fleur had not been lonely. But he went in with a sinking heart. In the creampanelled drawingroom she was sitting with her elbows on her knees, and her chin on her clasped hands, in front of a white camellia plant which filled the fireplace. That glance at her before she saw him renewed his dread. What was she seeing among those white camellias?

"Well, Father!"

Soames shook his head. His tongue failed him. This was murderous work! He saw her eyes dilate, her lips quivering.

"What? What? Quick, Father!"

"My dear," said Soames, "I did my best, but" And again he shook his head.

Fleur ran to him, and put a hand on each of his shoulders.

"She?"

"No," muttered Soames; "he. I was to tell you that it was no use; he must do what his father wished before he died." He caught her by the waist. "Come, child, don't let them hurt you. They're not worth your little finger."

Fleur tore herself from his grasp.

"You didn't you couldn't have tried. You you betrayed me, Father!"

Bitterly wounded, Soames gazed at her passionate figure writhing there in front of him.

"You didn't try you didn't I was a fool! I won't believe he could he ever could! Only yesterday he! Oh! why did I ask you?"

"Yes," said Soames, quietly, "why did you? I swallowed my feelings; I did my best for you, against my judgment and this is my reward. Goodnight!"

With every nerve in his body twitching he went toward the door.

Fleur darted after him.

"He gives me up? You mean that? Father!"

Soames turned and forced himself to answer:

"Yes."

"Oh!" cried Fleur. "What did you what could you have done in those old days?"

The breathless sense of really monstrous injustice cut the power of speech in Soames' throat. What had he done! What had they done to him!

And with quite unconscious dignity he put his hand on his breast, and looked at her.

"It's a shame!" cried Fleur passionately.

Soames went out. He mounted, slow and icy, to his picture gallery, and paced among his treasures. Outrageous! Oh! Outrageous! She was spoiled! Ah! and who had spoiled her? He stood still before the Goya copy. Accustomed to her own way in everything. Flower of his life! And now that she couldn't have it! He turned to the window for some air. Daylight was dying, the moon rising, gold behind the poplars! What sound was that? Why! That piano thing! A dark tune, with a thrum and a throb! She had set it going what comfort could she get from that? His eyes caught movement down there beyond the lawn, under the trellis of rambler roses and young acacia trees, where the moonlight fell. There she was, roaming up and down. His heart gave a little sickening jump. What

would she do under this blow? How could he tell? What did he know of her? He had only loved her all his life! He looked on her as the apple of his eye! He knew nothing! He had no notion. There she was! And that dark tune! And the river gleaming in the moonlight!

'I must go out,' he thought.

He hastened down to the drawingroom, lighted just as he had left it, with the piano thrumming out that waltz, or foxtrot, or whatever they called it in these days, and passed through on to the verandah.

Where could he watch, without her seeing him? And he stole down through the fruit garden to the boathouse. He was between her and the river now, and his heart felt lighter. She was his daughter, and Annette! She wouldn't do anything foolish; but there it was! He didn't know! From the boat house window he could see the last acacia and the spin of her skirt when she turned in her restless march. That tune had run down at last! Thank goodness! He crossed the floor and looked through the farther window at the water slowly flowing past the lilies. It made little bubbles against them, bright where a moonstreak fell. He remembered suddenly that early morning when he had slept on the houseboat after his father died, and she had just been born! Nearly nineteen years ago! Even now he recalled the unaccustomed world when he woke up, the strange feeling it had given him. That day the second passion of his life began! For this girl of his, roaming under the acacias. What a comfort she had been to him! And all the soreness and sense of outrage left him. If he could make her happy again, he didn't care! An owl flew, queeking, queeking; a bat flitted by; the moonlight brightened and broadened on the water. How long was she going to roam about like this! He went back to the window, and suddenly saw her coming down to the bank. She stood quite close, on the landing stage. And Soames watched, clenching his hands. Should he speak to her? His excitement was intense. The stillness of her figure, its youth, its absorption in despair, in longing, in itself. He would always remember it, moonlit like that; and the faint sweet reek of the river and the shivering of the willow leaves. She had everything in the world that he could give her, except the one thing that she could not have because of him! The perversity of things hurt him at that moment, as might a fishbone in his throat.

Then, with an infinite relief, he saw her turn back toward the house. What could he give her to make amends? Pearls, travel, horses, other young men! Anything she wanted! That he might lose the memory of her young figure lonely by the water! There! She had set that tune going again! Why! It was a mania! Dark, thrumming, faint, travelling from the house. It was as though she had said: "If I can't have something to keep me going, I shall die of this!" Soames dimly understood. Well, if it helped her, let her keep it thrumming on all night! And, mousing back through the fruit garden, he regained the verandah. Though he meant to go in and speak to her now, he still hesitated, not knowing what to say, trying hard to recall how it felt to be thwarted in love. He ought to know, ought to

remember and he could not! Gone all real recollection; except that it had hurt him horribly. In this blankness he stood passing his handkerchief over hands and lips, which were very dry. By craning his head he could just see Fleur, standing with her back to that piano still grinding out its tune, her arms tight crossed on her breast, a lighted cigarette between her lips, whose smoke half veiled her face. The expression on it was strange to Soames, the eyes shone and stared, and every feature was alive with a sort of wretched scorn and anger. Once or twice he had seen Annette look like that the face was too vivid, too naked, not his daughter's at that moment. And he dared not go in, realising the futility of any attempt at consolation. He sat down in the shadow of the inglenook.

Monstrous trick, that Fate had played him! Nemesis! That old unhappy marriage! And in God's name why? How was he to know, when he wanted Irene so violently, and she consented to be his, that she would never love him? The tune died and was renewed, and died again, and still Soames sat in the shadow, waiting for he knew not what. The fag of Fleur's cigarette, flung through the window, fell on the grass; he watched it glowing, burning itself out. The moon had freed herself above the poplars, and poured her unreality on the garden. Comfortless light, mysterious, withdrawn like the beauty of that woman who had never loved him dapping the nemesias and the stocks with a vesture not of earth. Flowers! And his flower so unhappy! Ah! Why could one not put happiness into Local Loans, gild its edges, insure it against going down?

Light had ceased to flow out now from the drawingroom window. All was silent and dark in there. Had she gone up? He rose, and, tiptoeing, peered in. It seemed so! He entered. The verandah kept the moonlight out; and at first he could see nothing but the outlines of furniture blacker than the darkness. He groped toward the farther window to shut it. His foot struck a chair, and he heard a gasp. There she was, curled and crushed into the corner of the sofa! His hand hovered. Did she want his consolation? He stood, gazing at that ball of crushed frills and hair and graceful youth, trying to burrow its way out of sorrow. How leave her there? At last he touched her hair, and said:

"Come, darling, better go to bed. I'll make it up to you, somehow." How fatuous! But what could he have said?

UNDER THE OAKTREE

When their visitor had disappeared Jon and his mother stood without speaking, till he said suddenly:

"I ought to have seen him out."

But Soames was already walking down the drive, and Jon went upstairs to his father's studio, not trusting himself to go back.

The expression on his mother's face confronting the man she had once been married to, had sealed a resolution growing within him ever since she left him the night before. It had put the finishing touch of reality. To marry Fleur would be to hit his mother in the face; to betray his dead father! It was no good! Jon had the least resentful of natures. He bore his parents no grudge in this hour of his distress. For one so young there was a rather strange power in him of seeing things in some sort of proportion. It was worse for Fleur, worse for his mother even, than it was for him. Harder than to give up was to be given up, or to be the cause of some one you loved giving up for you. He must not, would not behave grudgingly! While he stood watching the tardy sunlight, he had again that sudden vision of the world which had come to him the night before. Sea on sea, country on country, millions on millions of people, all with their own lives, energies, joys, griefs, and suffering all with things they had to give up, and separate struggles for existence. Even though he might be willing to give up all else for the one thing he couldn't have, he would be a fool to think his feelings mattered much in so vast a world, and to behave like a crybaby or a cad. He pictured the people who had nothing the millions who had given up life in the War, the millions whom the War had left with life and little else; the hungry children he had read of, the shattered men; people in prison, every kind of unfortunate. And they did not help him much. If one had to miss a meal, what comfort in the knowledge that many others had to miss it too? There was more distraction in the thought of getting away out into this vast world of which he knew nothing yet. He could not go on staying here, walled in and sheltered, with everything so slick and comfortable, and nothing to do but brood and think what might have been. He could not go back to Wansdon, and the memories of Fleur. If he saw her again he could not trust himself; and if he stayed here or went back there, he would surely see her. While they were within reach of each other that must happen. To go far away and quickly was the only thing to do. But, however much he loved his mother, he did not want to go away with her. Then feeling that was brutal, he made up his mind desperately to propose that they should go to Italy. For two hours in that melancholy room he tried to master himself, then dressed solemnly for dinner.

His mother had done the same. They ate little, at some length, and talked of his father's catalogue. The show was arranged for October, and beyond clerical detail there was nothing more to do.

After dinner she put on a cloak and they went out; walked a little, talked a little, till they were standing silent at last beneath the oaktree. Ruled by the thought: 'If I show anything, I show all,' Jon put his arm through hers and said quite casually:

"Mother, let's go to Italy."

Irene pressed his arm, and said as casually:

"It would be very nice; but I've been thinking you ought to see and do more than you would if I were with you."

"But then you'd be alone."

"I was once alone for more than twelve years. Besides, I should like to be here for the opening of Father's show."

Jon's grip tightened round her arm; he was not deceived.

"You couldn't stay here all by yourself; it's too big."

"Not here, perhaps. In London, and I might go to Paris, after the show opens. You ought to have a year at least, Jon, and see the world."

"Yes, I'd like to see the world and rough it. But I don't want to leave you all alone."

"My dear, I owe you that at least. If it's for your good, it'll be for mine. Why not start tomorrow? You've got your passport."

"Yes; if I'm going it had better be at once. Only Mother if I wanted to stay out somewhere America or anywhere, would you mind coming presently?"

"Wherever and whenever you send for me. But don't send until you really want me."

Jon drew a deep breath.

"I feel England's choky."

They stood a few minutes longer under the oaktree looking out to where the grand stand at Epsom was veiled in evening. The branches kept the moonlight from them, so that it

only fell everywhere else over the fields and far away, and on the windows of the creepered house behind, which soon would be to let.

FLEUR'S WEDDING

The October paragraphs describing the wedding of Fleur Forsyte to Michael Mont hardly conveyed the symbolic significance of this event. In the union of the greatgranddaughter of "Superior Dosset" with the heir of a ninth baronet was the outward and visible sign of that merger of class in class which buttresses the political stability of a realm. The time had come when the Forsytes might resign their natural resentment against a "flummery" not theirs by birth, and accept it as the still more natural due of their possessive instincts. Besides, they had to mount to make room for all those so much more newly rich. In that quiet but tasteful ceremony in Hanover Square, and afterward among the furniture in Green Street, it had been impossible for those not in the know to distinguish the Forsyte troop from the Mont contingent so far away was "Superior Dosset" now. Was there, in the crease of his trousers, the expression of his moustache, his accent, or the shine on his tophat, a pin to choose between Soames and the ninth baronet himself? Was not Fleur as selfpossessed, quick, glancing, pretty, and hard as the likeliest Muskham, Mont, or Charwell filly present? If anything, the Forsytes had it in dress and looks and manners. They had become "upper class" and now their name would be formally recorded in the Stud Book, their money joined to land. Whether this was a little late in the day, and those rewards of the possessive instinct, lands and money, destined for the melting pot was still a question so moot that it was not mooted. After all, Timothy had said Consols were goin' up. Timothy, the last, the missing link; Timothy, in extremis on the Bayswater Road so Francie had reported. It was whispered, too, that this young Mont was a sort of socialist strangely wise of him, and in the nature of insurance, considering the days they lived in. There was no uneasiness on that score. The landed classes produced that sort of amiable foolishness at times, turned to safe uses and confined to theory. As George remarked to his sister Francie: "They'll soon be having puppies that'll give him pause."

The church with white flowers and something blue in the middle of the East window looked extremely chaste, as though endeavouring to counteract the somewhat lurid phraseology of a Service calculated to keep the thoughts of all on puppies. Forsytes, Haymans, Tweetymans, sat in the left aisle; Monts, Charwells; Muskhams in the right; while a sprinkling of Fleur's fellow sufferers at school, and of Mont's fellow sufferers in, the War, gaped indiscriminately from either side, and three maiden ladies, who had dropped in on their way from Skyward's brought up the rear, together with two Mont retainers and Fleur's old nurse. In the unsettled state of the country as full a house as could be expected.

Mrs. Val Dartie, who sat with her husband in the third row, squeezed his hand more than once during the performance. To her, who knew the plot of this tragicomedy, its most dramatic moment was well nigh painful. 'I wonder if Jon knows by instinct,' she

thought Jon, out in British Columbia. She had received a letter from him only that morning which had made her smile and say:

"Jon's in British Columbia, Val, because he wants to be in California. He thinks it's too nice there."

"Oh!" said Val, "so he's beginning to see a joke again."

"He's bought some land and sent for his mother."

"What on earth will she do out there?"

"All she cares about is Jon. Do you still think it a happy release?"

Val's shrewd eyes narrowed to grey pinpoints between their dark lashes.

"Fleur wouldn't have suited him a bit. She's not bred right."

"Poor little Fleur!" sighed Holly. Ah! it was strange this marriage. The young man, Mont, had caught her on the rebound, of course, in the reckless mood of one whose ship has just gone down. Such a plunge could not but be as Val put it an outside chance. There was little to be told from the back view of her young cousin's veil, and Holly's eyes reviewed the general aspect of this Christian wedding. She, who had made a love match which had been successful, had a horror of unhappy marriages. This might not be one in the end but it was clearly a tossup; and to consecrate a tossup in this fashion with manufactured unction before a crowd of fashionable freethinkers for who thought otherwise than freely, or not at all, when they were "dolled" up seemed to her as near a sin as one could find in an age which had abolished them. Her eyes wandered from the prelate in his robes (a Charwell the Forsytes had not as yet produced a prelate) to Val, beside her, thinking she was certain of the Mayfly filly at fifteen to one for the Cambridgeshire. They passed on and caught the profile of the ninth baronet, in counterfeiting of the kneeling process. She could just see the neat ruck above his knees where he had pulled his trousers up, and thought: 'Val's forgotten to pull up his!' Her eyes passed to the pew in front of her, where Winifred's substantial form was gowned with passion, and on again to Soames and Annette kneeling side by side. A little smile came on her lips. Prosper Profond, back from the South Seas of the Channel, would be kneeling too, about six rows behind. Yes! This was a funny "small" business, however it turned out; still it was in a proper church and would be in the proper papers tomorrow morning.

They had begun a hymn; she could hear the ninth baronet across the aisle, singing of the hosts of Midian. Her little finger touched Val's thumb they were holding the same

hymnbook and a tiny thrill passed through her, preserved from twenty years ago. He stooped and whispered:

"I say, d'you remember the rat?" The rat at their wedding in Cape Colony, which had cleaned its whiskers behind the table at the Registrar's! And between her little and third fingers she squeezed his thumb hard.

The hymn was over, the prelate had begun to deliver his discourse. He told them of the dangerous times they lived in, and the awful conduct of the House of Lords in connection with divorce. They were all soldiers she said in the trenches under the poisonous gas of the Prince of Darkness, and must be manful. The purpose of marriage was children, not mere sinful happiness.

An imp danced in Holly's eyes Val's eyelashes were meeting. Whatever happened; he must not snore. Her finger and thumb closed on his thigh till he stirred uneasily.

The discourse was over, the danger past. They were signing in the vestry; and general relaxation had set in.

A voice behind her said:

"Will she stay the course?"

"Who's that?" she whispered.

"Old George Forsyte!"

Holly demurely scrutinized one of whom she had often heard. Fresh from South Africa, and ignorant of her kith and kin, she never saw one without an almost childish curiosity. He was very big, and very dapper; his eyes gave her a funny feeling of having no particular clothes.

"They're off!" she heard him say.

They came, stepping from the chancel. Holly looked first in young Mont's face. His lips and ears were twitching, his eyes, shifting from his feet to the hand within his arm, stared suddenly before them as if to face a firing party. He gave Holly the feeling that he was spiritually intoxicated. But Fleur! Ah! That was different. The girl was perfectly composed, prettier than ever, in her white robes and veil over her banged dark chestnut hair; her eyelids hovered demure over her dark hazel eyes. Outwardly, she seemed all there. But inwardly, where was she? As those two passed, Fleur raised her eyelid the restless glint of those clear whites remained on Holly's vision as might the flutter of caged bird's wings.

In Green Street Winifred stood to receive, just a little less composed than usual. Soames' request for the use of her house had come on her at a deeply psychological moment. Under the influence of a remark of Prosper Profond, she had begun to exchange her Empire for Expressionistic furniture. There were the most amusing arrangements, with violet, green, and orange blobs and scriggles, to be had at Mealand's. Another month and the change would have been complete. Just now, the very "intriguing" recruits she had enlisted, did not march too well with the old guard. It was as if her regiment were half in khaki, half in scarlet and bearskins. But her strong and comfortable character made the best of it in a drawingroom which typified, perhaps, more perfectly than she imagined, the semibolshevized imperialism of her country. After all, this was a day of merger, and you couldn't have too much of it! Her eyes travelled indulgently among her guests. Soames had gripped the back of a buhl chair; young Mont was behind that "awfully amusing" screen, which no one as yet had been able to explain to her. The ninth baronet had shied violently at a round scarlet table, inlaid under glass with blue Australian butterflies' wings, and was clinging to her LouisQuinze cabinet; Francie Forsyte had seized the new mantelboard, finely carved with little purple grotesques on an ebony ground; George, over by the old spinet, was holding a little skyblue book as if about to enter bets; Prosper Profond was twiddling the knob of the open door, black with peacockblue panels; and Annette's hands, close by, were grasping her own waist; two Muskams clung to the balcony among the plants, as if feeling ill; Lady Mont, thin and bravelooking, had taken up her longhandled glasses and was gazing at the central light shade, of ivory and orange dashed with deep magenta, as if the heavens had opened. Everybody, in fact, seemed holding on to something. Only Fleur, still in her bridal dress, was detached from all support, flinging her words and glances to left and right.

The room was full of the bubble and the squeak of conversation. Nobody could hear anything that anybody said; which seemed of little consequence, since no one waited for anything so slow as an answer. Modern conversation seemed to Winifred so different from the days of her prime, when a drawl was all the vogue. Still it was "amusing," which, of course, was all that mattered. Even the Forsytes were talking with extreme rapidity Fleur and Christopher, and Imogen, and young Nicholas's youngest, Patrick. Soames, of course, was silent; but George, by the spinet, kept up a running commentary, and Francie, by her mantelshelf. Winifred drew nearer to the ninth baronet. He seemed to promise a certain repose; his nose was fine and drooped a little, his grey moustaches too; and she said, drawling through her smile:

"It's rather nice, isn't it?"

His reply shot out of his smile like a snipped bread pellet

"D'you remember, in Frazer, the tribe that buries the bride up to the waist?"

He spoke as fast as anybody! He had dark lively little eyes, too, all crinkled round like a Catholic priest's. Winifred felt suddenly he might say things she would regret.

"They're always so amusing weddings," she murmured, and moved on to Soames. He was curiously still, and Winifred saw at once what was dictating his immobility. To his right was George Forsyte, to his left Annette and Prosper Profond. He could not move without either seeing those two together, or the reflection of them in George Forsyte's japing eyes. He was quite right not to be taking notice.

"They say Timothy's sinking," he said glumly.

"Where will you put him, Soames?"

"Highgate." He counted on his fingers. "It'll make twelve of them there, including wives. How do you think Fleur looks?"

"Remarkably well."

Soames nodded. He had never seen her look prettier, yet he could not rid himself of the impression that this business was unnatural remembering still that crushed figure burrowing into the corner of the sofa. From that night to this day he had received from her no confidences. He knew from his chauffeur that she had made one more attempt on Robin Hill and drawn blank an empty house, no one at home. He knew that she had received a letter, but not what was in it, except that it had made her hide herself and cry. He had remarked that she looked at him sometimes when she thought he wasn't noticing, as if she were wondering still what he had done forsooth to make those people hate him so. Well, there it was! Annette had come back, and things had worn on through the summer very miserable, till suddenly Fleur had said she was going to marry young Mont. She had shown him a little more affection when she told him that. And he had yielded what was the good of opposing it? God knew that he had never wished to thwart her in anything! And the young man seemed quite delirious about her. No doubt she was in a reckless mood, and she was young, absurdly young. But if he opposed her, he didn't know what she would do; for all he could tell she might want to take up a profession, become a doctor or solicitor, some nonsense. She had no aptitude for painting, writing, music, in his view the legitimate occupations of unmarried women, if they must do something in these days. On the whole, she was safer married, for he could see too well how feverish and restless she was at home. Annette, too, had been in favour of it Annette, from behind the veil of his refusal to know what she was about, if she was about anything. Annette had said: "Let her marry this young man. He is a nice boy not so highflyflighty as he seems." Where she got her expressions, he didn't know but her opinion soothed his doubts. His wife, whatever her conduct, had clear eyes and an almost depressing amount of common sense. He had settled fifty thousand on Fleur,

taking care that there was no cross settlement in case it didn't turn out well. Could it turn out well? She had not got over that other boy he knew. They were to go to Spain for the honeymoon. He would be even lonelier when she was gone. But later, perhaps, she would forget, and turn to him again! Winifred's voice broke on his reverie.

"Why! Of all wonders June!"

There, in a djibbah what things she wore! with her hair straying from under a fillet, Soames saw his cousin, and Fleur going forward to greet her. The two passed from their view out on to the stairway.

"Really," said Winifred, "she does the most impossible things! Fancy her coming!"

"What made you ask her?" muttered Soames.

"Because I thought she wouldn't accept, of course."

Winifred had forgotten that behind conduct lies the main trend of character; or, in other words, omitted to remember that Fleur was now a "lame duck."

On receiving her invitation, June had first thought, 'I wouldn't go near them for the world!' and then, one morning, had awakened from a dream of Fleur waving to her from a boat with a wild unhappy gesture. And she had changed her mind.

When Fleur came forward and said to her, "Do come up while I'm changing my dress," she had followed up the stairs. The girl led the way into Imogen's old bedroom, set ready for her toilet.

June sat down on the bed, thin and upright, like a little spirit in the sear and yellow. Fleur locked the door.

The girl stood before her divested of her wedding dress. What a pretty thing she was!

"I suppose you think me a fool," she said, with quivering lips, "when it was to have been Jon. But what does it matter? Michael wants me, and I don't care. It'll get me away from home." Diving her hand into the frills on her breast, she brought out a letter. "Jon wrote me this."

June read: "Lake Okanagan, British Columbia. I'm not coming back to England. Bless you always. Jon."

"She's made safe, you see," said Fleur.

June handed back the letter.

"That's not fair to Irene," she said, "she always told Jon he could do as he wished."

Fleur smiled bitterly. "Tell me, didn't she spoil your life too?" June looked up. "Nobody can spoil a life, my dear. That's nonsense. Things happen, but we bob up."

With a sort of terror she saw the girl sink on her knees and bury her face in the djibbah. A strangled sob mounted to June's ears.

"It's all rightall right," she murmured, "Don't! There, there!"

But the point of the girl's chin was pressed ever closer into her thigh, and the sound was dreadful of her sobbing.

Well, well! It had to come. She would feel better afterward! June stroked the short hair of that shapely head; and all the scattered mothersense in her focussed itself and passed through the tips of her fingers into the girl's brain.

"Don't sit down under it, my dear," she said at last. "We can't control life, but we can fight it. Make the best of things. I've had to. I held on, like you; and I cried, as you're crying now. And look at me!"

Fleur raised her head; a sob merged suddenly into a little choked laugh. In truth it was a thin and rather wild and wasted spirit she was looking at, but it had brave eyes.

"All right!" she said. "I'm sorry. I shall forget him, I suppose, if I fly fast and far enough."

And, scrambling to her feet, she went over to the washstand.

June watched her removing with cold water the traces of emotion. Save for a little becoming pinkness there was nothing left when she stood before the mirror. June got off the bed and took a pincushion in her hand. To put two pins into the wrong places was all the vent she found for sympathy.

"Give me a kiss," she said when Fleur was ready, and dug her chin into the girl's warm cheek.

"I want a whiff," said Fleur; "don't wait."

June left her, sitting on the bed with a cigarette between her lips and her eyes half closed, and went downstairs. In the doorway of the drawingroom stood Soames as if unquiet at his daughter's tardiness. June tossed her head and passed down on to the halflanding. Her cousin Francie was standing there.

"Look!" said June, pointing with her chin at Soames. "That man's fatal!"

"How do you mean," said Francie, "fatal?"

June did not answer her. "I shan't wait to see them off," she said. "Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!" said Francie, and her eyes, of a Celtic grey, goggled. That old feud! Really, it was quite romantic!

Soames, moving to the well of the staircase, saw June go, and drew a breath of satisfaction. Why didn't Fleur come? They would miss their train. That train would bear her away from him, yet he could not help fidgeting at the thought that they would lose it. And then she did come, running down in her tancoloured frock and black velvet cap, and passed him into the drawingroom. He saw her kiss her mother, her aunt, Val's wife, Imogen, and then come forth, quick and pretty as ever. How would she treat him at this last moment of her girlhood? He couldn't hope for much!

Her lips pressed the middle of his cheek.

"Daddy!" she said, and was past and gone! Daddy! She hadn't called him that for years. He drew a long breath and followed slowly down. There was all the folly with that confetti stuff and the rest of it to go through with yet. But he would like just to catch her smile, if she leaned out, though they would hit her in the eye with the shoe, if they didn't take care. Young Mont's voice said fervently in his ear:

"Goodbye, sir; and thank you! I'm so fearfully bucked."

"Goodbye," he said; "don't miss your train."

He stood on the bottom step but three, whence he could see above the headsthe silly hats and heads. They were in the car now; and there was that stuff, showering, and there went the shoe. A flood of something welled up in Soames, andhe didn't knowhe couldn't see!

THE LAST OF THE OLD FORSYTES

When they came to prepare that terrific symbol Timothy Forsytethe one pure individualist left, the only man who hadn't heard of the Great Warthey found him wonderfulnot even death had undermined his soundness.

To Smither and Cook that preparation came like final evidence of what they had never believed possiblethe end of the old Forsyte family on earth. Poor Mr. Timothy must now take a harp and sing in the company of Miss Forsyte, Mrs. Julia, Miss Hester; with Mr. Jolyon, Mr. Swithin, Mr. James, Mr. Roger, and Mr. Nicholas of the party. Whether Mrs. Hayman would be there was more doubtful, seeing that she had been cremated. Secretly Cook thought that Mr. Timothy would be upsethe had always been so set against barrel organs. How many times had she not said: "Drat the thing! There it is again! Smither, you'd better run up and see what you can do." And in her heart she would so have enjoyed the tunes, if she hadn't known that Mr. Timothy would ring the bell in a minute and say: "Here, take him a halfpenny and tell him to move on." Often they had been obliged to add threepence of their own before the man would goTimothy had ever underrated the value of emotion. Luckily he had taken the organs for bluebottles in his last years, which had been a comfort, and they had been able to enjoy the tunes. But a harp! Cook wondered. It was a change! And Mr. Timothy had never liked change. But she did not speak of this to Smither, who did so take a line of her own in regard to heaven that it quite put one about sometimes.

She cried while Timothy was being prepared, and they all had sherry afterward out of the yearly Christmas bottle, which would not be needed now. Ah! dear! She had been there fiveandforty years and Smither threeandforty! And now they would be going to a tiny house in Tooting, to live on their savings and what Miss Hester had so kindly left themfor to take fresh service after the glorious pastNo! But they would like just to see Mr. Soames again, and Mrs. Dartie, and Miss Francie, and Miss Euphemia. And even if they had to take their own cab, they felt they must go to the funeral. For six years Mr. Timothy had been their baby, getting younger and younger every day, till at last he had been too young to live.

They spent the regulation hours of waiting in polishing and dusting, in catching the one mouse left, and asphyxiating the last beetle so as to leave it nice, discussing with each other what they would buy at the sale. Miss Ann's workbox; Miss Juley's (that is Mrs. Julia's) seaweed album; the firescreen Miss Hester had crewelled; and Mr. Timothy's hairlittle golden curls, glued into a black frame. Oh! they must have thoseonly the price of things had gone up so!

It fell to Soames to issue invitations for the funeral. He had them drawn up by Gradman in his office only blood relations, and no flowers. Six carriages were ordered. The Will would be read afterward at the house.

He arrived at eleven o'clock to see that all was ready. At a quarter past old Gradman came in black gloves and crape on his hat. He and Soames stood in the drawingroom waiting. At halfpast eleven the carriages drew up in a long row. But no one else appeared. Gradman said:

"It surprises me, Mr. Soames. I posted them myself."

"I don't know," said Soames; "he'd lost touch with the family." Soames had often noticed in old days how much more neighbourly his family were to the dead than to the living. But, now, the way they had flocked to Fleur's wedding and abstained from Timothy's funeral, seemed to show some vital change. There might, of course, be another reason; for Soames felt that if he had not known the contents of Timothy's Will, he might have stayed away himself through delicacy. Timothy had left a lot of money, with nobody in particular to leave it to. They mightn't like to seem to expect something.

At twelve o'clock the procession left the door; Timothy alone in the first carriage under glass. Then Soames alone; then Gradman alone; then Cook and Smith together. They started at a walk, but were soon trotting under a bright sky. At the entrance to Highgate Cemetery they were delayed by service in the Chapel. Soames would have liked to stay outside in the sunshine. He didn't believe a word of it; on the other hand, it was a form of insurance which could not safely be neglected, in case there might be something in it after all.

They walked up two and two and Gradman, Cook and Smith to the family vault. It was not very distinguished for the funeral of the last old Forsyte.

He took Gradman into his carriage on the way back to the Bayswater Road with a certain glow in his heart. He had a surprise in pickle for the old chap who had served the Forsytes four and fifty years a treat that was entirely his doing. How well he remembered saying to Timothy the day after Aunt Hester's funeral: "Well; Uncle Timothy, there's Gradman. He's taken a lot of trouble for the family. What do you say to leaving him five thousand?" and his surprise, seeing the difficulty there had been in getting Timothy to leave anything, when Timothy had nodded. And now the old chap would be as pleased as Punch, for Mrs. Gradman, he knew, had a weak heart, and their son had lost a leg in the War. It was extraordinarily gratifying to Soames to have left him five thousand pounds of Timothy's money. They sat down together in the little drawingroom, whose walls like a vision of heaven were sky blue and gold with every picture frame unnaturally bright, and every speck of dust removed from every piece of furniture, to read that little

masterpiecethe Will of Timothy. With his back to the light in Aunt Hester's chair, Soames faced Gradman with his face to the light, on Aunt Ann's sofa; and, crossing his legs, began:

"This is the last Will and Testament of me Timothy Forsyte of The Bower Bayswater Road, London I appoint my nephew Soames Forsyte of The Shelter Mapleduram and Thomas Gradman of 159 Folly Road Highgate (hereinafter called my Trustees) to be the trustees and executors of this my Will To the said Soames Forsyte I leave the sum of one thousand pounds free of legacy duty and to the said Thomas Gradman I leave the sum of five thousand pounds free of legacy duty."

Soames paused. Old Gradman was leaning forward, convulsively gripping a stout black knee with each of his thick hands; his mouth had fallen open so that the gold fillings of three teeth gleamed; his eyes were blinking, two tears rolled slowly out of them. Soames read hastily on.

"All the rest of my property of whatsoever description I bequeath to my Trustees upon Trust to convert and hold the same upon the following trusts namely To pay thereout all my debts funeral expenses and outgoings of any kind in connection with my Will and to hold the residue thereof in trust for that male lineal descendant of my father Jolyon Forsyte by his marriage with Ann Pierce who after the decease of all lineal descendants whether male or female of my said father by his said marriage in being at the time of my death shall last attain the age of twentyone years absolutely it being my desire that my property shall be nursed to the extreme limit permitted by the laws of England for the benefit of such male lineal descendant as aforesaid."

Soames read the investment and attestation clauses, and, ceasing, looked at Gradman. The old fellow was wiping his brow with a large handkerchief, whose brilliant colour supplied a sudden festive tinge to the proceedings.

"My word, Mr. Soames!" he said, and it was clear that the lawyer in him had utterly wiped out the man: "My word! Why, there are two babies now, and some quite young childrenif one of them lives to be eightyit's not a great ageand add twentyonethat's a hundred years; and Mr. Timothy worth a hundred and fifty thousand pound net if he's worth a penny. Compound interest at five per cent. doubles you in fourteen years. In fourteen years three hundred thousandsix hundred thousand in twentyeighttwelve hundred thousand in fortytwotwentyfour hundred thousand in fiftysixfour million eight hundred thousand in seventynine million six hundred thousand in eightyfourWhy, in a hundred years it'll be twenty million! And we shan't live to use it! It is a Will!"

Soames said dryly: "Anything may happen. The State might take the lot; they're capable of anything in these days."

"And carry five," said Gradman to himself. "I forgot Mr. Timothy's in Consols; we shan't get more than two per cent. with this income tax. To be on the safe side, say eight millions. Still, that's a pretty penny."

Soames rose and handed him the Will. "You're going into the City. Take care of that, and do what's necessary. Advertise; but there are no debts. When's the sale?"

"Tuesday week," said Gradman. "Life or lives in bein' and twentyone years afterward it's a long way off. But I'm glad he's left it in the family...."

The sale not at Jobson's, in view of the Victorian nature of the effects was far more freely attended than the funeral, though not by Cook and Smither, for Soames had taken it on himself to give them their heart's desires. Winifred was present, Euphemia, and Francie, and Eustace had come in his car. The miniatures, Barbizons, and J. R. drawings had been bought in by Soames; and relics of no marketable value were set aside in an offroom for members of the family who cared to have mementoes. These were the only restrictions upon bidding characterised by an almost tragic languor. Not one piece of furniture, no picture or porcelain figure appealed to modern taste. The humming birds had fallen like autumn leaves when taken from where they had not hummed for sixty years. It was painful to Soames to see the chairs his aunts had sat on, the little grand piano they had practically never played, the books whose outsides they had gazed at, the china they had dusted, the curtains they had drawn, the hearthrug which had warmed their feet; above all, the beds they had lain and died in sold to little dealers, and the housewives of Fulham. And yet what could one do? Buy them and stick them in a lumberroom? No; they had to go the way of all flesh and furniture, and be worn out. But when they put up Aunt Ann's sofa and were going to knock it down for thirty shillings, he cried out, suddenly: "Five pounds!" The sensation was considerable, and the sofa his.

When that little sale was over in the fusty saleroom, and those Victorian ashes scattered, he went out into the misty October sunshine feeling as if cosiness had died out of the world, and the board "To Let" was up, indeed. Revolutions on the horizon; Fleur in Spain; no comfort in Annette; no Timothy's on the Bayswater Road. In the irritable desolation of his soul he went into the Goupenor Gallery. That chap Jolyon's watercolours were on view there. He went in to look down his nose at them it might give him some faint satisfaction. The news had trickled through from June to Val's wife, from her to Val, from Val to his mother, from her to Soames, that the house the fatal house at Robin Hill was for sale, and Irene going to join her boy out in British Columbia, or some such place. For one wild moment the thought had come to Soames: 'Why shouldn't I buy it back? I meant it for my!' No sooner come than gone. Too lugubrious a triumph; with too many humiliating memories for himself and Fleur. She would never live there after what had happened. No, the place must go its way to some peer or profiteer. It had been a bone of contention from the first, the shell of the feud; and with the woman gone, it

was an empty shell. "For Sale or To Let." With his mind's eye he could see that board raised high above the ivied wall which he had built.

He passed through the first of the two rooms in the Gallery. There was certainly a body of work! And now that the fellow was dead it did not seem so trivial. The drawings were pleasing enough, with quite a sense of atmosphere, and something individual in the brush work. 'His father and my father; he and I; his child and mine!' thought Soames. So it had gone on! And all about that woman! Softened by the events of the past week, affected by the melancholy beauty of the autumn day, Soames came nearer than he had ever been to realisation of that truth passing the understanding of a Forsyte pure that the body of Beauty has a spiritual essence, uncapturable save by a devotion which thinks not of self. After all, he was near that truth in his devotion to his daughter; perhaps that made him understand a little how he had missed the prize. And there, among the drawings of his kinsman, who had attained to that which he had found beyond his reach, he thought of him and her with a tolerance which surprised him. But he did not buy a drawing.

Just as he passed the seat of custom on his return to the outer air he met with a contingency which had not been entirely absent from his mind when he went into the Gallery Irene, herself, coming in. So she had not gone yet, and was still paying farewell visits to that fellow's remains! He subdued the little involuntary leap of his subconsciousness, the mechanical reaction of his senses to the charm of this once owned woman, and passed her with averted eyes. But when he had gone by he could not for the life of him help looking back. This, then, was finally the heat and stress of his life, the madness and the longing thereof, the only defeat he had known, would be over when she faded from his view this time; even such memories had their own queer aching value.

She, too, was looking back. Suddenly she lifted her gloved hand, her lips smiled faintly, her dark eyes seemed to speak. It was the turn of Soames to make no answer to that smile and that little farewell wave; he went out into the fashionable street quivering from head to foot. He knew what she had meant to say: "Now that I am going for ever out of the reach of you and yours forgive me; I wish you well." That was the meaning; last sign of that terrible reality passing morality, duty, common sense her aversion from him who had owned her body, but had never touched her spirit or her heart. It hurt; yes more than if she had kept her mask unmoved, her hand unlifted.

Three days later, in that fast yellowing October, Soames took a taxicab to Highgate Cemetery and mounted through its white forest to the Forsyte vault. Close to the cedar, above catacombs and columbaria, tall, ugly, and individual, it looked like an apex of the competitive system. He could remember a discussion wherein Swithin had advocated the addition to its face of the pheasant proper. The proposal had been rejected in favour of a wreath in stone, above the stark words: "The family vault of Jolyon Forsyte: 1850."

It was in good order. All trace of the recent interment had been removed, and its sober grey gloomed reposefully in the sunshine. The whole family lay there now, except old Jolyon's wife, who had gone back under a contract to her own family vault in Suffolk; old Jolyon himself lying at Robin Hill; and Susan Hayman, cremated so that none knew where she might be. Soames gazed at it with satisfaction massive, needing little attention; and this was important, for he was well aware that no one would attend to it when he himself was gone, and he would have to be looking out for lodgings soon. He might have twenty years before him, but one never knew. Twenty years without an aunt or uncle, with a wife of whom one had better not know anything, with a daughter gone from home. His mood inclined to melancholy and retrospection.

This cemetery was full, they said of people with extraordinary names, buried in extraordinary taste. Still, they had a fine view up here, right over London. Annette had once given him a story to read by that Frenchman, Maupassant, most lugubrious concern, where all the skeletons emerged from their graves one night, and all the pious inscriptions on the stones were altered to descriptions of their sins. Not a true story at all. He didn't know about the French, but there was not much real harm in English people except their teeth and their taste, which was certainly deplorable. "The family vault of Jolyon Forsyte: 1850." A lot of people had been buried here since then a lot of English life crumbled to mould and dust! The boom of an airplane passing under the goldtinted clouds caused him to lift his eyes. The deuce of a lot of expansion had gone on. But it all came back to a cemetery to a name and a date on a tomb. And he thought with a curious pride that he and his family had done little or nothing to help this feverish expansion. Good solid middlemen, they had gone to work with dignity to manage and possess. "Superior Dosset," indeed, had built in a dreadful, and Jolyon painted in a doubtful, period, but so far as he remembered not another of them all had soiled his hands by creating anything unless you counted Val Dartie and his horsebreeding. Collectors, solicitors, barristers, merchants, publishers, accountants, directors, land agents, even soldiersthere they had been! The country had expanded, as it were, in spite of them. They had checked, controlled, defended, and taken advantage of the process and when you considered how "Superior Dosset" had begun life with next to nothing, and his lineal descendants already owned what old Gradman estimated at between a million and a million and a half, it was not so bad! And yet he sometimes felt as if the family bolt was shot, their possessive instinct dying out. They seemed unable to make moneythis fourth generation; they were going into art, literature, farming, or the army; or just living on what was left themthey had no push and no tenacity. They would die out if they didn't take care.

Soames turned from the vault and faced toward the breeze. The air up here would be delicious if only he could rid his nerves of the feeling that mortality was in it. He gazed restlessly at the crosses and the urns, the angels, the "immortelles," the flowers, gaudy

or withering; and suddenly he noticed a spot which seemed so different from anything else up there that he was obliged to walk the few necessary yards and look at it. A sober corner, with a massive queershaped cross of grey roughhewn granite, guarded by four dark yewtrees. The spot was free from the pressure of the other graves, having a little boxhedge garden on the far side, and in front a goldening birchtree. This oasis in the desert of conventional graves appealed to the aesthetic sense of Soames, and he sat down there in the sunshine. Through those trembling gold birch leaves he gazed out at London, and yielded to the waves of memory. He thought of Irene in Montpellier Square, when her hair was rustygolden and her white shoulders his Irene, the prize of his lovepassion, resistant to his ownership. He saw Bosinney's body lying in that white mortuary, and Irene sitting on the sofa looking at space with the eyes of a dying bird. Again he thought of her by the little green Niobe in the Bois de Boulogne, once more rejecting him. His fancy took him on beside his drifting river on the November day when Fleur was to be born, took him to the dead leaves floating on the greentinged water and the snakeheaded weed for ever swaying and nosing, sinuous, blind, tethered. And on again to the window opened to the cold starry night above Hyde Park, with his father lying dead. His fancy darted to that picture of "the future town," to that boy's and Fleur's first meeting; to the bluish trail of Prosper Profond's cigar, and Fleur in the window pointing down to where the fellow prowled. To the sight of Irene and that dead fellow sitting side by side in the stand at Lord's. To her and that boy at Robin Hill. To the sofa, where Fleur lay crushed up in the corner; to her lips pressed into his cheek, and her farewell "Daddy." And suddenly he saw again Irene's greygloved hand waving its last gesture of release.

He sat there a long time dreaming his career, faithful to the scut of his possessive instinct, warming himself even with its failures.

"To Let" the Forsyte age and way of life, when a man owned his soul, his investments, and his woman, without check or question. And now the State had, or would have, his investments, his woman had herself, and God knew who had his soul. "To Let" that sane and simple creed!

The waters of change were foaming in, carrying the promise of new forms only when their destructive flood should have passed its full. He sat there, subconscious of them, but with his thoughts resolutely set on the past as a man might ride into a wild night with his face to the tail of his galloping horse. Athwart the Victorian dykes the waters were rolling on property, manners, and morals, on melody and the old forms of artwaters bringing to his mouth a salt taste as of blood, lapping to the foot of this Highgate Hill where Victorianism lay buried. And sitting there, high up on its most individual spot, Soameslike a figure of Investment refused their restless sounds. Instinctively he would not fight them there was in him too much primeval wisdom, of Man the possessive animal. They would quiet down when they had fulfilled their tidal fever of dispossessing

and destroying; when the creations and the properties of others were sufficiently broken and defected they would lapse and ebb, and fresh forms would rise based on an instinct older than the fever of change the instinct of Home.

"Je m'en fiche," said Prosper Profond. Soames did not say "Je m'en fiche" it was French, and the fellow was a thorn in his side but deep down he knew that change was only the interval of death between two forms of life, destruction necessary to make room for fresher property. What though the board was up, and cosiness to let? some one would come along and take it again some day.

And only one thing really troubled him, sitting there the melancholy craving in his heart because the sun was like enchantment on his face and on the clouds and on the golden birch leaves, and the wind's rustle was so gentle, and the yew tree green so dark, and the sickle of a moon pale in the sky.

He might wish and wish and never get it the beauty and the loving in the world!