

Jolyon Prosecutes Trusteeship

By

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***Free*editorial** 

JOLYON PROSECUTES TRUSTEESHIP

When those two were gone Jolyon did not return to his painting, for daylight was failing, but went to the study, craving unconsciously a revival of that momentary vision of his father sitting in the old leather chair with his knees crossed and his straight eyes gazing up from under the dome of his massive brow. Often in this little room, cosiest in the house, Jolyon would catch a moment of communion with his father. Not, indeed, that he had definitely any faith in the persistence of the human spirit—the feeling was not so logical—it was, rather, an atmospheric impact, like a scent, or one of those strong animistic impressions from forms, or effects of light, to which those with the artist's eye are especially prone. Here only in this little unchanged room where his father had spent the most of his waking hours could be retrieved the feeling that he was not quite gone, that the steady counsel of that old spirit and the warmth of his masterful lovability endured.

What would his father be advising now, in this sudden recrudescence of an old tragedy—what would he say to this menace against her to whom he had taken such a fancy in the last weeks of his life? 'I must do my best for her,' thought Jolyon; 'he left her to me in his will. But what is the best?'

And as if seeking to regain the sapience, the balance and shrewd common sense of that old Forsyte, he sat down in the ancient chair and crossed his knees. But he felt a mere shadow sitting there; nor did any inspiration come, while the fingers of the wind tapped on the darkening panes of the french window.

'Go and see her?' he thought, 'or ask her to come down here? What's her life been? What is it now, I wonder? Beastly to rake up things at this time of day.' Again the figure of his cousin standing with a hand on a front door of a fine olivegreen leaped out, vivid, like one of those figures from old-fashioned clocks when the hour strikes; and his words sounded in Jolyon's ears clearer than any chime: "I manage my own affairs. I've told you once, I tell you again: We are not at home." The repugnance he had then felt for Soames for his flatcheeked, shaven face full of spiritual bulldoggedness; for his spare, square, sleek figure slightly crouched as it were over the bone he could not digest came now again, fresh as ever, nay, with an odd increase. 'I dislike him,' he thought, 'I dislike him to the very roots of me. And that's lucky; it'll make it easier for me to back his wife.' Half artist, and half Forsyte, Jolyon was constitutionally averse from what he termed 'ructions'; unless angered, he conformed deeply to that classic description of the shedog, 'Er'd ruther run than fight.' A little smile became settled in his beard. Ironical that Soames should come down here to this house, built for himself! How he had gazed and gaped at this ruin of his past intention; furtively nosing at the walls and stairway, appraising everything! And intuitively Jolyon thought: 'I believe the fellow even now

would like to be living here. He could never leave off longing for what he once owned! Well, I must act, somehow or other; but it's a bore a great bore.'

Late that evening he wrote to the Chelsea flat, asking if Irene would see him.

The old century which had seen the plant of individualism flower so wonderfully was setting in a sky orange with coming storms. Rumours of war added to the briskness of a London turbulent at the close of the summer holidays. And the streets to Jolyon, who was not often up in town, had a feverish look, due to these new motorcars and cabs, of which he disapproved aesthetically. He counted these vehicles from his hansom, and made the proportion of them one in twenty. 'They were one in thirty about a year ago,' he thought; 'they've come to stay. Just so much more rattling round of wheels and general stink' for he was one of those rather rare Liberals who object to anything new when it takes a material form; and he instructed his driver to get down to the river quickly, out of the traffic, desiring to look at the water through the mellowing screen of planetrees. At the little block of flats which stood back some fifty yards from the Embankment, he told the cabman to wait, and went up to the first floor.

Yes, Mrs. Heron was at home!

The effect of a settled if very modest income was at once apparent to him remembering the threadbare refinement in that tiny flat eight years ago when he announced her good fortune. Everything was now fresh, dainty, and smelled of flowers. The general effect was silvery with touches of black, hydrangea colour, and gold. 'A woman of great taste,' he thought. Time had dealt gently with Jolyon, for he was a Forsyte. But with Irene Time hardly seemed to deal at all, or such was his impression. She appeared to him not a day older, standing there in molecoloured velvet corduroy, with soft dark eyes and dark gold hair, with outstretched hand and a little smile.

"Won't you sit down?"

He had probably never occupied a chair with a fuller sense of embarrassment.

"You look absolutely unchanged," he said.

"And you look younger, Cousin Jolyon."

Jolyon ran his hands through his hair, whose thickness was still a comfort to him.

"I'm ancient, but I don't feel it. That's one thing about painting, it keeps you young. Titian lived to ninety-nine, and had to have plague to kill him off. Do you know, the first time I ever saw you I thought of a picture by him?"

"When did you see me for the first time?"

"In the Botanical Gardens."

"How did you know me, if you'd never seen me before?"

"By someone who came up to you." He was looking at her hardily, but her face did not change; and she said quietly:

"Yes; many lives ago."

"What is your recipe for youth, Irene?"

"People who don't live are wonderfully preserved."

H'm! a bitter little saying! People who don't live! But an opening, and he took it. "You remember my Cousin Soames?"

He saw her smile faintly at that whimsicality, and at once went on:

"He came to see me the day before yesterday! He wants a divorce. Do you?"

"I?" The word seemed startled out of her. "After twelve years? It's rather late. Won't it be difficult?"

Jolyon looked hard into her face. "Unless" he said.

"Unless I have a lover now. But I have never had one since."

What did he feel at the simplicity and candour of those words? Relief, surprise, pity! Venus for twelve years without a lover!

"And yet," he said, "I suppose you would give a good deal to be free, too?"

"I don't know. What does it matter, now?"

"But if you were to love again?"

"I should love." In that simple answer she seemed to sum up the whole philosophy of one on whom the world had turned its back.

"Well! Is there anything you would like me to say to him?"

"Only that I'm sorry he's not free. He had his chance once. I don't know why he didn't take it."

"Because he was a Forsyte; we never part with things, you know, unless we want something in their place; and not always then."

Irene smiled. "Don't you, Cousin Jolyon? I think you do."

"Of course, I'm a bit of a mongrel not quite a pure Forsyte. I never take the halfpennies off my cheques, I put them on," said Jolyon uneasily.

"Well, what does Soames want in place of me now?"

"I don't know; perhaps children."

She was silent for a little, looking down.

"Yes," she murmured; "it's hard. I would help him to be free if I could."

Jolyon gazed into his hat, his embarrassment was increasing fast; so was his admiration, his wonder, and his pity. She was so lovely, and so lonely; and altogether it was such a coil!

"Well," he said, "I shall have to see Soames. If there's anything I can do for you I'm always at your service. You must think of me as a wretched substitute for my father. At all events I'll let you know what happens when I speak to Soames. He may supply the material himself."

She shook her head.

"You see, he has a lot to lose; and I have nothing. I should like him to be free; but I don't see what I can do."

"Nor I at the moment," said Jolyon, and soon after took his leave. He went down to his hansom. Halfpast three! Soames would be at his office still.

"To the Poultry," he called through the trap. In front of the Houses of Parliament and in Whitehall, newsvendors were calling, "Grave situation in the Transvaal!" but the cries hardly roused him, absorbed in recollection of that very beautiful figure, of her soft dark glance, and the words: "I have never had one since." What on earth did such a woman do with her life, backwatered like this? Solitary, unprotected, with every man's hand against her or rather reaching out to grasp her at the least sign. And year after year she went on like that!

The word 'Poultry' above the passing citizens brought him back to reality.

'Forsyte, Bustard and Forsyte,' in black letters on a ground the colour of peasoup, spurred him to a sort of vigour, and he went up the stone stairs muttering: "Fusty musty ownerships! Well, we couldn't do without them!"

"I want Mr. Soames Forsyte," he said to the boy who opened the door.

"What name?"

"Mr. Jolyon Forsyte."

The youth looked at him curiously, never having seen a Forsyte with a beard, and vanished.

The offices of 'Forsyte, Bustard and Forsyte' had slowly absorbed the offices of 'Tooting and Bowles,' and occupied the whole of the first floor.

The firm consisted now of nothing but Soames and a number of managing and article-clerks. The complete retirement of James some six years ago had accelerated business, to which the final touch of speed had been imparted when Bustard dropped off, worn out, as many believed, by the suit of 'Fryer versus Forsyte,' more in Chancery than ever and less likely to benefit its beneficiaries. Soames, with his saner grasp of actualities, had never permitted it to worry him; on the contrary, he had long perceived that Providence had presented him therein with £200 a year net in perpetuity, and why not?

When Jolyon entered, his cousin was drawing out a list of holdings in Consols, which in view of the rumours of war he was going to advise his companies to put on the market at once, before other companies did the same. He looked round, sidelong, and said:

"How are you? Just one minute. Sit down, won't you?" And having entered three amounts, and set a ruler to keep his place, he turned towards Jolyon, biting the side of his flat forefinger

"Yes?" he said.

"I have seen her."

Soames frowned.

"Well?"

"She has remained faithful to memory."

Having said that, Jolyon was ashamed. His cousin had flushed a dusky yellowish red. What had made him tease the poor brute!

"I was to tell you she is sorry you are not free. Twelve years is a long time. You know your law, and what chance it gives you." Soames uttered a curious little grunt, and the two remained a full minute without speaking. 'Like wax!' thought Jolyon, watching that close face, where the flush was fast subsiding. 'He'll never give me a sign of what he's thinking, or going to do. Like wax!' And he transferred his gaze to a plan of that flourishing town, 'ByStreet on Sea,' the future existence of which lay exposed on the wall to the possessive instincts of the firm's clients. The whimsical thought flashed through him: 'I wonder if I shall get a bill of costs for this "To attending Mr. Jolyon Forsyte in the matter of my divorce, to receiving his account of his visit to my wife, and to advising him to go and see her again, sixteen and eightpence."'

Suddenly Soames said: "I can't go on like this. I tell you, I can't go on like this." His eyes were shifting from side to side, like an animal's when it looks for way of escape. 'He really suffers,' thought Jolyon; 'I've no business to forget that, just because I don't like him.'

"Surely," he said gently, "it lies with yourself. A man can always put these things through if he'll take it on himself."

Soames turned square to him, with a sound which seemed to come from somewhere very deep.

"Why should I suffer more than I've suffered already? Why should I?"

Jolyon could only shrug his shoulders. His reason agreed, his instinct rebelled; he could not have said why.

"Your father," went on Soames, "took an interest in her why, goodness knows! And I suppose you do too?" he gave Jolyon a sharp look. "It seems to me that one only has to do another person a wrong to get all the sympathy. I don't know in what way I was to blame I've never known. I always treated her well. I gave her everything she could wish for. I wanted her."

Again Jolyon's reason nodded; again his instinct shook its head. 'What is it?' he thought; 'there must be something wrong in me. Yet if there is, I'd rather be wrong than right.'

"After all," said Soames with a sort of glum fierceness, "she was my wife."

In a flash the thought went through his listener: 'There it is! Ownerships! Well, we all own things. Buthuman beings! Pah!'

"You have to look at facts," he said drily, "or rather the want of them."

Soames gave him another quick suspicious look.

"The want of them?" he said. "Yes, but I am not so sure."

"I beg your pardon," replied Jolyon; "I've told you what she said. It was explicit."

"My experience has not been one to promote blind confidence in her word. We shall see."

Jolyon got up.

"Goodbye," he said curtly.

"Goodbye," returned Soames; and Jolyon went out trying to understand the look, halfstartled, halfmenacing, on his cousin's face. He sought Waterloo Station in a disturbed frame of mind, as though the skin of his moral being had been scraped; and all the way down in the train he thought of Irene in her lonely flat, and of Soames in his lonely office, and of the strange paralysis of life that lay on them both. 'In chancery!' he thought. 'Both their necks in chancery and her's so pretty!'

CHAPTER I

VAL HEARS THE NEWS

The keeping of engagements had not as yet been a conspicuous feature in the life of young Val Dartie, so that when he broke two and kept one, it was the latter event which caused him, if anything, the greater surprise, while jogging back to town from Robin Hill after his ride with Holly. She had been even prettier than he had thought her yesterday, on her silverroan, longtailed 'palfrey'; and it seemed to him, selfcritical in the brumous October gloaming and the outskirts of London, that only his boots had shone throughout their twohour companionship. He took out his new gold 'hunter'present from Jamesand looked not at the time, but at sections of his face in the glittering back of its opened case. He had a temporary spot over one eyebrow, and it displeased him, for it must have displeased her. Crum never had any spots. Together with Crum rose the scene in the promenade of the Pandemonium. Today he had not had the faintest desire to unbosom himself to Holly about his father. His father lacked poetry, the stirrings of which he was feeling for the first time in his nineteen years. The Liberty, with Cynthia Dark, that almost mythical embodiment of rapture; the Pandemonium, with the woman of uncertain ageboth seemed to Val completely 'off,' fresh from communion with this new, shy, darkhaired young cousin of his. She rode 'Jolly well,' too, so that it had been all the more flattering that she had let him lead her where he would in the long gallops of Richmond Park, though she knew them so much better than he did. Looking back on it all, he was mystified by the barrenness of his speech; he felt that he could say 'an awful lot of fetching things' if he had but the chance again, and the thought that he must go back to Littlehampton on the morrow, and to Oxford on the twelfth'to that beastly exam,' toowithout the faintest chance of first seeing her again, caused darkness to settle on his spirit even more quickly than on the evening. He should write to her, however, and she had promised to answer. Perhaps, too, she would come up to Oxford to see her brother. That thought was like the first star, which came out as he rode into Padwick's livery stables in the purlieus of Sloane Square. He got off and stretched himself luxuriously, for he had ridden some twentyfive good miles. The Dartie within him made him chaffer for five minutes with young Padwick concerning the favourite for the Cambridgeshire; then with the words, "Put the gee down to my account," he walked away, a little wide at the knees, and flipping his boots with his knotty little cane. 'I don't feel a bit inclined to go out,' he thought. 'I wonder if mother will stand fizz for my last night!' With 'fizz' and recollection, he could well pass a domestic evening.

When he came down, speckless after his bath, he found his mother scrupulous in a low evening dress, and, to his annoyance, his Uncle Soames. They stopped talking when he came in; then his uncle said:

"He'd better be told."

At those words, which meant something about his father, of course, Val's first thought was of Holly. Was it anything beastly? His mother began speaking.

"Your father," she said in her fashionably appointed voice, while her fingers plucked rather pitifully at seagreen brocade, "your father, my dear boy, hasis not at Newmarket; he's on his way to South America. Hehe's left us."

Val looked from her to Soames. Left them! Was he sorry? Was he fond of his father? It seemed to him that he did not know. Then, suddenlyas at a whiff of gardenias and cigarshis heart twitched within him, and he was sorry. One's father belonged to one, could not go off in this fashionit was not done! Nor had he always been the 'bounder' of the Pandemonium promenade. There were precious memories of tailors' shops and horses, tips at school, and general lavish kindness, when in luck.

"But why?" he said. Then, as a sportsman himself, was sorry he had asked. The mask of his mother's face was all disturbed; and he burst out:

"All right, Mother, don't tell me! Only, what does it mean?"

"A divorce, Val, I'm afraid."

Val uttered a queer little grunt, and looked quickly at his unclet hat uncle whom he had been taught to look on as a guarantee against the consequences of having a father, even against the Dartie blood in his own veins. The flatchecked visage seemed to wince, and this upset him.

"It won't be public, will it?"

So vividly before him had come recollection of his own eyes glued to the unsavoury details of many a divorce suit in the Public Press.

"Can't it be done quietly somehow? It's so disgusting forfor mother, andand everybody."

"Everything will be done as quietly as it can, you may be sure."

"Yesbut, why is it necessary at all? Mother doesn't want to marry again."

Himself, the girls, their name tarnished in the sight of his schoolfellows and of Crum, of the men at Oxford, ofHolly! Unbearable! What was to be gained by it?

"Do you, Mother?" he said sharply.

Thus brought face to face with so much of her own feeling by the one she loved best in the world, Winifred rose from the Empire chair in which she had been sitting. She saw

that her son would be against her unless he was told everything; and, yet, how could she tell him? Thus, still plucking at the green brocade, she stared at Soames. Val, too, stared at Soames. Surely this embodiment of respectability and the sense of property could not wish to bring such a slur on his own sister!

Soames slowly passed a little inlaid paperknife over the smooth surface of a marqueterie table; then, without looking at his nephew, he began:

"You don't understand what your mother has had to put up with these twenty years. This is only the last straw, Val." And glancing up sideways at Winifred, he added:

"Shall I tell him?"

Winifred was silent. If he were not told, he would be against her! Yet, how dreadful to be told such things of his own father! Clenching her lips, she nodded.

Soames spoke in a rapid, even voice:

"He has always been a burden round your mother's neck. She has paid his debts over and over again; he has often been drunk, abused and threatened her; and now he is gone to Buenos Aires with a dancer." And, as if distrusting the efficacy of those words on the boy, he went on quickly:

"He took your mother's pearls to give to her."

Val jerked up his hand, then. At that signal of distress Winifred cried out:

"That'll do, Soamesstop!"

In the boy, the Dartie and the Forsyte were struggling. For debts, drink, dancers, he had a certain sympathy; but the pearlsno! That was too much! And suddenly he found his mother's hand squeezing his.

"You see," he heard Soames say, "we can't have it all begin over again. There's a limit; we must strike while the iron's hot."

Val freed his hand.

"Butyou'renever going to bring out that about the pearls! I couldn't stand thatI simply couldn't!"

Winifred cried out:

"No, no, Valoh no! That's only to show you how impossible your father is!" And his uncle nodded. Somewhat assuaged, Val took out a cigarette. His father had bought him that thin curved case. Oh! it was unbearable just as he was going up to Oxford!

"Can't mother be protected without?" he said. "I could look after her. It could always be done later if it was really necessary."

A smile played for a moment round Soames' lips, and became bitter.

"You don't know what you're talking of; nothing's so fatal as delay in such matters."

"Why?"

"I tell you, boy, nothing's so fatal. I know from experience."

His voice had the ring of exasperation. Val regarded him roundeyed, never having known his uncle express any sort of feeling. Oh! Yes he remembered now there had been an Aunt Irene, and something had happened something which people kept dark; he had heard his father once use an unmentionable word of her.

"I don't want to speak ill of your father," Soames went on doggedly, "but I know him well enough to be sure that he'll be back on your mother's hands before a year's over. You can imagine what that will mean to her and to all of you after this. The only thing is to cut the knot for good."

In spite of himself, Val was impressed; and, happening to look at his mother's face, he got what was perhaps his first real insight into the fact that his own feelings were not always what mattered most.

"All right, mother," he said; "we'll back you up. Only I'd like to know when it'll be. It's my first term, you know. I don't want to be up there when it comes off."

"Oh! my dear boy," murmured Winifred, "it is a bore for you." So, by habit, she phrased what, from the expression of her face, was the most poignant regret. "When will it be, Soames?"

"Can't tell not for months. We must get restitution first."

'What the deuce is that?' thought Val. 'What silly brutes lawyers are! Not for months! I know one thing: I'm not going to dine in!' And he said:

"Awfully sorry, mother, I've got to go out to dinner now."

Though it was his last night, Winifred nodded almost gratefully; they both felt that they had gone quite far enough in the expression of feeling.

Val sought the misty freedom of Green Street, reckless and depressed. And not till he reached Piccadilly did he discover that he had only eighteenpence. One couldn't dine off eighteenpence, and he was very hungry. He looked longingly at the windows of the Iseeum Club, where he had often eaten of the best with his father! Those pearls! There was no getting over them! But the more he brooded and the further he walked the hungrier he naturally became. Short of trailing home, there were only two places where he could go his grandfather's in Park Lane, and Timothy's in the Bayswater Road. Which was the less deplorable? At his grandfather's he would probably get a better dinner on the spur of the moment. At Timothy's they gave you a jolly good feed when they expected you, not otherwise. He decided on Park Lane, not unmoved by the thought that to go up to Oxford without affording his grandfather a chance to tip him was hardly fair to either of them. His mother would hear he had been there, of course, and might think it funny; but he couldn't help that. He rang the bell.

"Hullo, Warmson, any dinner for me, d'you think?"

"They're just going in, Master Val. Mr. Forsyte will be very glad to see you. He was saying at lunch that he never saw you nowadays."

Val grinned.

"Well, here I am. Kill the fatted calf, Warmson, let's have fizz."

Warmson smiled faintly in his opinion Val was a young limb.

"I will ask Mrs. Forsyte, Master Val."

"I say," Val grumbled, taking off his overcoat, "I'm not at school any more, you know."

Warmson, not without a sense of humour, opened the door beyond the stag'shorn coat stand, with the words:

"Mr. Valerus, ma'am."

"Confound him!" thought Val, entering.

A warm embrace, a "Well, Val!" from Emily, and a rather quavery "So there you are at last!" from James, restored his sense of dignity.

"Why didn't you let us know? There's only saddle of mutton. Champagne, Warmson," said Emily. And they went in.

At the great diningtable, shortened to its utmost, under which so many fashionable legs had rested, James sat at one end, Emily at the other, Val halfway between them; and something of the loneliness of his grandparents, now that all their four children were flown, reached the boy's spirit. 'I hope I shall kick the bucket long before I'm as old as grandfather,' he thought. 'Poor old chap, he's as thin as a rail!' And lowering his voice while his grandfather and Warmson were in discussion about sugar in the soup, he said to Emily:

"It's pretty brutal at home, Granny. I suppose you know."

"Yes, dear boy."

"Uncle Soames was there when I left. I say, isn't there anything to be done to prevent a divorce? Why is he so beastly keen on it?"

"Hush, my dear!" murmured Emily; "we're keeping it from your grandfather."

James' voice sounded from the other end.

"What's that? What are you talking about?"

"About Val's college," returned Emily. "Young Pariser was there, James; you rememberhe nearly broke the Bank at Monte Carlo afterwards."

James muttered that he did not knowVal must look after himself up there, or he'd get into bad ways. And he looked at his grandson with gloom, out of which affection distrustfully glimmered.

"What I'm afraid of," said Val to his plate, "is of being hard up, you know."

By instinct he knew that the weak spot in that old man was fear of insecurity for his grandchildren.

"Well," said James, and the soup in his spoon dribbled over, "you'll have a good allowance; but you must keep within it."

"Of course," murmured Val; "if it is good. How much will it be, Grandfather?"

"Three hundred and fifty; it's too much. I had next to nothing at your age."

Val sighed. He had hoped for four, and been afraid of three. "I don't know what your young cousin has," said James; "he's up there. His father's a rich man."

"Aren't you?" asked Val hardily.

"I?" replied James, flustered. "I've got so many expenses. Your father" and he was silent.

"Cousin Jolyon's got an awfully jolly place. I went down there with Uncle Soamesripping stables."

"Ah!" murmured James profoundly. "That houseI knew how it would be!" And he lapsed into gloomy meditation over his fishbones. His son's tragedy, and the deep cleavage it had caused in the Forsyte family, had still the power to draw him down into a whirlpool of doubts and misgivings. Val, who hankered to talk of Robin Hill, because Robin Hill meant Holly, turned to Emily and said:

"Was that the house built for Uncle Soames?" And, receiving her nod, went on: "I wish you'd tell me about him, Granny. What became of Aunt Irene? Is she still going? He seems awfully workedup about something tonight."

Emily laid her finger on her lips, but the word Irene had caught James' ear.

"What's that?" he said, staying a piece of mutton close to his lips. "Who's been seeing her? I knew we hadn't heard the last of that."

"Now, James," said Emily, "eat your dinner. Nobody's been seeing anybody."

James put down his fork.

"There you go," he said. "I might die before you'd tell me of it. Is Soames getting a divorce?"

"Nonsense," said Emily with incomparable aplomb; "Soames is much too sensible."

James had sought his own throat, gathering the long white whiskers together on the skin and bone of it.

"Sheshe was always" he said, and with that enigmatic remark the conversation lapsed, for Warmson had returned. But later, when the saddle of mutton had been succeeded by sweet, savoury, and dessert, and Val had received a cheque for twenty pounds and his grandfather's kisslike no other kiss in the world, from lips pushed out with a sort of fearful suddenness, as if yielding to weaknesshe returned to the charge in the hall.

"Tell us about Uncle Soames, Granny. Why is he so keen on mother's getting a divorce?"

"Your Uncle Soames," said Emily, and her voice had in it an exaggerated assurance, "is a lawyer, my dear boy. He's sure to know best."

"Is he?" muttered Val. "But what did become of Aunt Irene? I remember she was jolly goodlooking."

"Sheer" said Emily, "behaved very badly. We don't talk about it."

"Well, I don't want everybody at Oxford to know about our affairs," ejaculated Val; "it's a brutal idea. Why couldn't father be prevented without its being made public?"

Emily sighed. She had always lived rather in an atmosphere of divorce, owing to her fashionable proclivities so many of those whose legs had been under her table having gained a certain notoriety. When, however, it touched her own family, she liked it no better than other people. But she was eminently practical, and a woman of courage, who never pursued a shadow in preference to its substance.

"Your mother," she said, "will be happier if she's quite free, Val. Goodnight, my dear boy; and don't wear loud waistcoats up at Oxford, they're not the thing just now. Here's a little present."

With another five pounds in his hand, and a little warmth in his heart, for he was fond of his grandmother, he went out into Park Lane. A wind had cleared the mist, the autumn leaves were rustling, and the stars were shining. With all that money in his pocket an impulse to 'see life' beset him; but he had not gone forty yards in the direction of Piccadilly when Holly's shy face, and her eyes with an imp dancing in their gravity, came up before him, and his hand seemed to be tingling again from the pressure of her warm gloved hand. 'No, dash it!' he thought, 'I'm going home!'

CHAPTER II

SOAMES ENTERTAINS THE FUTURE

It was full late for the river, but the weather was lovely, and summer lingered below the yellowing leaves. Soames took many looks at the day from his riverside garden near Mapledurham that Sunday morning.

With his own hands he put flowers about his little houseboat, and equipped the punt, in which, after lunch, he proposed to take them on the river. Placing those Chineselooking cushions, he could not tell whether or no he wished to take Annette alone. She was so very pretty could he trust himself not to say irrevocable words, passing beyond the limits of discretion? Roses on the veranda were still in bloom, and the hedges evergreen, so that there was almost nothing of middleaged autumn to chill the mood; yet was he nervous, fidgety, strangely distrustful of his powers to steer just the right course. This visit had been planned to produce in Annette and her mother a due sense of his possessions, so that they should be ready to receive with respect any overture he might later be disposed to make. He dressed with great care, making himself neither too young nor too old, very thankful that his hair was still thick and smooth and had no grey in it. Three times he went up to his picturegallery. If they had any knowledge at all, they must see at once that his collection alone was worth at least thirty thousand pounds. He minutely inspected, too, the pretty bedroom overlooking the river where they would take off their hats. It would be her bedroom if the matter went through, and she became his wife. Going up to the dressingtable he passed his hand over the lilaccoloured pincushion, into which were stuck all kinds of pins; a bowl of potpourri exhaled a scent that made his head turn just a little. His wife! If only the whole thing could be settled out of hand, and there was not the nightmare of this divorce to be gone through first; and with gloom puckered on his forehead, he looked out at the river shining beyond the roses and the lawn. Madame Lamotte would never resist this prospect for her child; Annette would never resist her mother. If only he were free! He drove to the station to meet them. What taste Frenchwomen had! Madame Lamotte was in black with touches of lilac colour, Annette in greyish lilac linen, with cream coloured gloves and hat. Rather pale she looked and Londony; and her blue eyes were demure. Waiting for them to come down to lunch, Soames stood in the open frenchwindow of the diningroom moved by that sensuous delight in sunshine and flowers and trees which only came to the full when youth and beauty were there to share it with one. He had ordered the lunch with intense consideration; the wine was a very special Sauterne, the whole appointments of the meal perfect, the coffee served on the veranda superexcellent. Madame Lamotte accepted creme de menthe; Annette refused. Her manners were charming, with just a suspicion of 'the conscious beauty' creeping into them. 'Yes,' thought Soames, 'another year of London and that sort of life, and she'll be spoiled.'

Madame was in sedate French raptures. "Adorable! Le soleil est si bon! How everything is chic, is it not, Annette? Monsieur is a real Monte Cristo." Annette murmured assent, with a look up at Soames which he could not read. He proposed a turn on the river. But to punt two persons when one of them looked so ravishing on those Chinese cushions was merely to suffer from a sense of lost opportunity; so they went but a short way towards Pangbourne, drifting slowly back, with every now and then an autumn leaf dropping on Annette or on her mother's black amplitude. And Soames was not happy, worried by the thought: 'Howwhenwherecan I saywhat?' They did not yet even know that he was married. To tell them he was married might jeopardise his every chance; yet, if he did not definitely make them understand that he wished for Annette's hand, it would be dropping into some other clutch before he was free to claim it.

At tea, which they both took with lemon, Soames spoke of the Transvaal.

"There'll be war," he said.

Madame Lamotte lamented.

"Ces pauvres gens bergers!" Could they not be left to themselves?

Soames smiledthe question seemed to him absurd.

Surely as a woman of business she understood that the British could not abandon their legitimate commercial interests.

"Ah! that!" But Madame Lamotte found that the English were a little hypocrite. They were talking of justice and the Uitlanders, not of business. Monsieur was the first who had spoken to her of that.

"The Boers are only halfcivilised," remarked Soames; "they stand in the way of progress. It will never do to let our suzerainty go."

"What does that mean to say? Suzerainty!"

"What a strange word!" Soames became eloquent, roused by these threats to the principle of possession, and stimulated by Annette's eyes fixed on him. He was delighted when presently she said:

"I think Monsieur is right. They should be taught a lesson." She was sensible!

"Of course," he said, "we must act with moderation. I'm no jingo. We must be firm without bullying. Will you come up and see my pictures?" Moving from one to another of these treasures, he soon perceived that they knew nothing. They passed his last Mauve, that remarkable study of a 'Haycart going Home,' as if it were a lithograph. He

waited almost with awe to see how they would view the jewel of his collection an Israel's whose price he had watched ascending till he was now almost certain it had reached top value, and would be better on the market again. They did not view it at all. This was a shock; and yet to have in Annette a virgin taste to form would be better than to have the silly, halfbaked predilections of the English middleclass to deal with. At the end of the gallery was a Meissonier of which he was rather ashamed Meissonier was so steadily going down. Madame Lamotte stopped before it.

"Meissonier! Ah! What a jewel!" Soames took advantage of that moment. Very gently touching Annette's arm, he said:

"How do you like my place, Annette?"

She did not shrink, did not respond; she looked at him full, looked down, and murmured:

"Who would not like it? It is so beautiful!"

"Perhaps some day" Soames said, and stopped.

So pretty she was, so selfpossessed she frightened him. Those cornflowerblue eyes, the turn of that creamy neck, her delicate curves she was a standing temptation to indiscretion! No! No! One must be sure of one's ground much surer! 'If I hold off,' he thought, 'it will tantalise her.' And he crossed over to Madame Lamotte, who was still in front of the Meissonier.

"Yes, that's quite a good example of his later work. You must come again, Madame, and see them lighted up. You must both come and spend a night."

Enchanted, would it not be beautiful to see them lighted? By moonlight too, the river must be ravishing!

Annette murmured:

"Thou art sentimental, Maman!"

Sentimental! That blackrobed, comely, substantial Frenchwoman of the world! And suddenly he was certain as he could be that there was no sentiment in either of them. All the better. Of what use sentiment? And yet!

He drove to the station with them, and saw them into the train. To the tightened pressure of his hand it seemed that Annette's fingers responded just a little; her face smiled at him through the dark.

He went back to the carriage, brooding. "Go on home, Jordan," he said to the coachman; "I'll walk." And he strode out into the darkening lanes, caution and the desire of possession playing seesaw within him. 'Bon soir, monsieur!' How softly she had said it. To know what was in her mind! The French they were like cats one could tell nothing! But how pretty! What a perfect young thing to hold in one's arms! What a mother for his heir! And he thought, with a smile, of his family and their surprise at a French wife, and their curiosity, and of the way he would play with it and buffet it confound them!

The poplars sighed in the darkness; an owl hooted. Shadows deepened in the water. 'I will and must be free,' he thought. 'I won't hang about any longer. I'll go and see Irene. If you want things done, do them yourself. I must live again live and move and have my being.' And in echo to that queer biblical churchbells chimed the call to evening prayer.

CHAPTER III

AND VISITS THE PAST

On a Tuesday evening after dining at his club Soames set out to do what required more courage and perhaps less delicacy than anything he had yet undertaken in his life—perhaps his birth, and one other action. He chose the evening, indeed, partly because Irene was more likely to be in, but mainly because he had failed to find sufficient resolution by daylight, had needed wine to give him extra daring.

He left his hansom on the Embankment, and walked up to the Old Church, uncertain of the block of flats where he knew she lived. He found it hiding behind a much larger mansion; and having read the name, 'Mrs. Irene Heron'—Heron, forsooth! Her maiden name: so she used that again, did she?—he stepped back into the road to look up at the windows of the first floor. Light was coming through in the corner flat, and he could hear a piano being played. He had never had a love of music, had secretly borne it a grudge in the old days when so often she had turned to her piano, making of it a refuge place into which she knew he could not enter. Repulse! The long repulse, at first restrained and secret, at last open! Bitter memory came with that sound. It must be she playing, and thus almost assured of seeing her, he stood more undecided than ever. Shivers of anticipation ran through him; his tongue felt dry, his heart beat fast. 'I have no cause to be afraid,' he thought. And then the lawyer stirred within him. Was he doing a foolish thing? Ought he not to have arranged a formal meeting in the presence of her trustee? No! Not before that fellow Jolyon, who sympathised with her! Never! He crossed back into the doorway, and, slowly, to keep down the beating of his heart, mounted the single flight of stairs and rang the bell. When the door was opened to him his sensations were regulated by the scent which came—that perfume—from away back in the past, bringing muffled remembrance: fragrance of a drawingroom he used to enter, of a house he used to own—perfume of dried roseleaves and honey!

"Say, Mr. Forsyte," he said, "your mistress will see me, I know." He had thought this out; she would think it was Jolyon!

When the maid was gone and he was alone in the tiny hall, where the light was dim from one pearlyshaded sconce, and walls, carpet, everything was silvery, making the walled-in space all ghostly, he could only think ridiculously: 'Shall I go in with my overcoat on, or take it off?' The music ceased; the maid said from the doorway:

"Will you walk in, sir?"

Soames walked in. He noted mechanically that all was still silvery, and that the upright piano was of satinwood. She had risen and stood recoiled against it; her hand, placed on the keys as if groping for support, had struck a sudden discord, held for a moment, and

released. The light from the shaded pianocandle fell on her neck, leaving her face rather in shadow. She was in a black evening dress, with a sort of mantilla over her shoulders she did not remember ever having seen her in black, and the thought passed through him: 'She dresses even when she's alone.'

"You!" he heard her whisper.

Many times Soames had rehearsed this scene in fancy. Rehearsal served him not at all. He simply could not speak. He had never thought that the sight of this woman whom he had once so passionately desired, so completely owned, and whom he had not seen for twelve years, could affect him in this way. He had imagined himself speaking and acting, half as man of business, half as judge. And now it was as if he were in the presence not of a mere woman and erring wife, but of some force, subtle and elusive as atmosphere itself within him and outside. A kind of defensive irony welled up in him.

"Yes, it's a queer visit! I hope you're well."

"Thank you. Will you sit down?"

She had moved away from the piano, and gone over to a windowseat, sinking on to it, with her hands clasped in her lap. Light fell on her there, so that Soames could see her face, eyes, hair, strangely as he remembered them, strangely beautiful.

He sat down on the edge of a satinwood chair, upholstered with silvercoloured stuff, close to where he was standing.

"You have not changed," he said.

"No? What have you come for?"

"To discuss things."

"I have heard what you want from your cousin."

"Well?"

"I am willing. I have always been."

The sound of her voice, reserved and close, the sight of her figure watchfully poised, defensive, was helping him now. A thousand memories of her, ever on the watch against him, stirred, and

"Perhaps you will be good enough, then, to give me information on which I can act. The law must be complied with."

"I have none to give you that you don't know of."

"Twelve years! Do you suppose I can believe that?"

"I don't suppose you will believe anything I say; but it's the truth."

Soames looked at her hard. He had said that she had not changed; now he perceived that she had. Not in face, except that it was more beautiful; not in form, except that it was a little fuller! She had changed spiritually. There was more of her, as it were, something of activity and daring, where there had been sheer passive resistance. 'Ah!' he thought, 'that's her independent income! Confound Uncle Jolyon!'

"I suppose you're comfortably off now?" he said.

"Thank you, yes."

"Why didn't you let me provide for you? I would have, in spite of everything."

A faint smile came on her lips; but she did not answer.

"You are still my wife," said Soames. Why he said that, what he meant by it, he knew neither when he spoke nor after. It was a truism almost preposterous, but its effect was startling. She rose from the windowseat, and stood for a moment perfectly still, looking at him. He could see her bosom heaving. Then she turned to the window and threw it open.

"Why do that?" he said sharply. "You'll catch cold in that dress. I'm not dangerous." And he uttered a little sad laugh.

She echoed it faintly, bitterly.

"It was a habit."

"Rather odd habit," said Soames as bitterly. "Shut the window!"

She shut it and sat down again. She had developed power, this woman, this wife of his! He felt it issuing from her as she sat there, in a sort of armour. And almost unconsciously he rose and moved nearer; he wanted to see the expression on her face. Her eyes met his unflinching. Heavens! how clear they were, and what a dark brown against that white skin, and that burntamber hair! And how white her shoulders.

Funny sensation this! He ought to hate her.

"You had better tell me," he said; "it's to your advantage to be free as well as to mine. That old matter is too old."

"I have told you."

"Do you mean to tell me there has been nothingnobody?"

"Nobody. You must go to your own life."

Stung by that retort, Soames moved towards the piano and back to the hearth, to and fro, as he had been wont in the old days in their drawingroom when his feelings were too much for him.

"That won't do," he said. "You deserted me. In common justice it's for you"

He saw her shrug those white shoulders, heard her murmur:

"Yes. Why didn't you divorce me then? Should I have cared?"

He stopped, and looked at her intently with a sort of curiosity. What on earth did she do with herself, if she really lived quite alone? And why had he not divorced her? The old feeling that she had never understood him, never done him justice, bit him while he stared at her.

"Why couldn't you have made me a good wife?" he said.

"Yes; it was a crime to marry you. I have paid for it. You will find some way perhaps. You needn't mind my name, I have none to lose. Now I think you had better go."

A sense of defeat of being defrauded of his selfjustification, and of something else beyond power of explanation to himself, beset Soames like the breath of a cold fog. Mechanically he reached up, took from the mantelshelf a little china bowl, reversed it, and said:

"Lowestoft. Where did you get this? I bought its fellow at Jobson's." And, visited by the sudden memory of how, those many years ago, he and she had bought china together, he remained staring at the little bowl, as if it contained all the past. Her voice roused him.

"Take it. I don't want it."

Soames put it back on the shelf.

"Will you shake hands?" he said.

A faint smile curved her lips. She held out her hand. It was cold to his rather feverish touch. 'She's made of ice,' he thought'she was always made of ice!' But even as that

thought darted through him, his senses were assailed by the perfume of her dress and body, as though the warmth within her, which had never been for him, were struggling to show its presence. And he turned on his heel. He walked out and away, as if someone with a whip were after him, not even looking for a cab, glad of the empty Embankment and the cold river, and the thickstrewn shadows of the planetree leavesconfused, flurried, sore at heart, and vaguely disturbed, as though he had made some deep mistake whose consequences he could not foresee. And the fantastic thought suddenly assailed him if instead of, 'I think you had better go,' she had said, 'I think you had better stay!' What should he have felt, what would he have done? That cursed attraction of her was there for him even now, after all these years of estrangement and bitter thoughts. It was there, ready to mount to his head at a sign, a touch. 'I was a fool to go!' he muttered. 'I've advanced nothing. Who could imagine? I never thought!' Memory, flown back to the first years of his marriage, played him torturing tricks. She had not deserved to keep her beautythe beauty he had owned and known so well. And a kind of bitterness at the tenacity of his own admiration welled up in him. Most men would have hated the sight of her, as she had deserved. She had spoiled his life, wounded his pride to death, defrauded him of a son. And yet the mere sight of her, cold and resisting as ever, had this power to upset him utterly! It was some damned magnetism she had! And no wonder if, as she asserted; she had lived untouched these last twelve years. So Bosinneycursed be his memory!had lived on all this time with her! Soames could not tell whether he was glad of that knowledge or no.

Nearing his Club at last he stopped to buy a paper. A headline ran: 'Boers reported to repudiate suzerainty!' Suzerainty! 'Just like her!' he thought: 'she always did. Suzerainty! I still have it by rights. She must be awfully lonely in that wretched little flat!'

CHAPTER IV

ON FORSYTE 'CHANGE

Soames belonged to two clubs, 'The Connoisseurs,' which he put on his cards and seldom visited, and 'The Remove,' which he did not put on his cards and frequented. He had joined this Liberal institution five years ago, having made sure that its members were now nearly all sound Conservatives in heart and pocket, if not in principle. Uncle Nicholas had put him up. The fine readingroom was decorated in the Adam style.

On entering that evening he glanced at the tape for any news about the Transvaal, and noted that Consols were down sevensixteenths since the morning. He was turning away to seek the readingroom when a voice behind him said:

"Well, Soames, that went off all right."

It was Uncle Nicholas, in a frockcoat and his special cutaway collar, with a black tie passed through a ring. Heavens! How young and dapper he looked at eightytwo!

"I think Roger'd have been pleased," his uncle went on. "The thing was very well done. Blackley's? I'll make a note of them. Buxton's done me no good. These Boers are upsetting methat fellow Chamberlain's driving the country into war. What do you think?"

"Bound to come," murmured Soames.

Nicholas passed his hand over his thin, cleanshaven cheeks, very rosy after his summer cure; a slight pout had gathered on his lips. This business had revived all his Liberal principles.

"I mistrust that chap; he's a stormy petrel. Houseproperty will go down if there's war. You'll have trouble with Roger's estate. I often told him he ought to get out of some of his houses. He was an opinionated beggar."

'There was a pair of you!' thought Soames. But he never argued with an uncle, in that way preserving their opinion of him as 'a longheaded chap,' and the legal care of their property.

"They tell me at Timothy's," said Nicholas, lowering his voice, "that Dartie has gone off at last. That'll be a relief to your father. He was a rotten egg."

Again Soames nodded. If there was a subject on which the Forsytes really agreed, it was the character of Montague Dartie.

"You take care," said Nicholas, "or he'll turn up again. Winifred had better have the tooth out, I should say. No use preserving what's gone bad."

Soames looked at him sideways. His nerves, exacerbated by the interview he had just come through, disposed him to see a personal allusion in those words.

"I'm advising her," he said shortly.

"Well," said Nicholas, "the brougham's waiting; I must get home. I'm very poorly. Remember me to your father."

And having thus reconsecrated the ties of blood, he passed down the steps at his youthful gait and was wrapped into his fur coat by the junior porter.

'I've never known Uncle Nicholas other than "very poorly,"' mused Soames, 'or seen him look other than everlasting. What a family! Judging by him, I've got thirtyeight years of health before me. Well, I'm not going to waste them.' And going over to a mirror he stood looking at his face. Except for a line or two, and three or four grey hairs in his little dark moustache, had he aged any more than Irene? The prime of life! And she in the very prime of life! And a fantastic thought shot into his mind. Absurd! Idiotic! But again it came. And genuinely alarmed by the recurrence, as one is by the second fit of shivering which presages a feverish cold, he sat down on the weighing machine. Eleven stone! He had not varied two pounds in twenty years. What age was she? Nearly thirtysevennot too old to have a childnot at all! Thirtyseven on the ninth of next month. He remembered her birthday wellhe had always observed it religiously, even that last birthday so soon before she left him, when he was almost certain she was faithless. Four birthdays in his house. He had looked forward to them, because his gifts had meant a semblance of gratitude, a certain attempt at warmth. Except, indeed, that last birthdaywhich had tempted him to be too religious! And he shied away in thought. Memory heaps dead leaves on corpselike deeds, from under which they do but vaguely offend the sense. And then he thought suddenly: 'I could send her a present for her birthday. After all, we're Christians! Couldn't!couldn't we join up again!' And he uttered a deep sigh sitting there. Annette! Ah! but between him and Annette was the need for that wretched divorce suit! And how?

"A man can always work these things, if he'll take it on himself," Jolyon had said.

But why should he take the scandal on himself with his whole career as a pillar of the law at stake? It was not fair! It was quixotic! Twelve years' separation in which he had taken no steps to free himself put out of court the possibility of using her conduct with Bosinney as a ground for divorcing her. By doing nothing to secure relief he had acquiesced, even if the evidence could now be gathered, which was more than doubtful. Besides, his own pride would never let him use that old incident, he had suffered from it

too much. No! Nothing but fresh misconduct on her part but she had denied it; and almost he had believed her. Hung up! Utterly hung up!

He rose from the scooped out red velvet seat with a feeling of constriction about his vitals. He would never sleep with this going on in him! And, taking coat and hat again, he went out, moving eastward. In Trafalgar Square he became aware of some special commotion travelling towards him out of the mouth of the Strand. It materialised in newspaper men calling out so loudly that no words whatever could be heard. He stopped to listen, and one came by.

"Payper! Special! Ultimatum by Krooger! Declaration of war!" Soames bought the paper. There it was in the stop press! His first thought was: 'The Boers are committing suicide.' His second: 'Is there anything still I ought to sell?' If so he had missed the chance there would certainly be a slump in the city tomorrow. He swallowed this thought with a nod of defiance. That ultimatum was insolent sooner than let it pass he was prepared to lose money. They wanted a lesson, and they would get it; but it would take three months at least to bring them to heel. There weren't the troops out there; always behind time, the Government! Confound those newspaper rats! What was the use of waking everybody up? Breakfast tomorrow was quite soon enough. And he thought with alarm of his father. They would cry it down Park Lane. Hailing a hansom, he got in and told the man to drive there.

James and Emily had just gone up to bed, and after communicating the news to Warmson, Soames prepared to follow. He paused by afterthought to say:

"What do you think of it, Warmson?"

The butler ceased passing a hat brush over the silk hat Soames had taken off, and, inclining his face a little forward, said in a low voice: "Well, sir, they 'aven't a chance, of course; but I'm told they're very good shots. I've got a son in the Inniskillings."

"You, Warmson? Why, I didn't know you were married."

"No, sir. I don't talk of it. I expect he'll be going out."

The slighter shock Soames had felt on discovering that he knew so little of one whom he thought he knew so well was lost in the slight shock of discovering that the war might touch one personally. Born in the year of the Crimean War, he had only come to consciousness by the time the Indian Mutiny was over; since then the many little wars of the British Empire had been entirely professional, quite unconnected with the Forsytes and all they stood for in the body politic. This war would surely be no exception. But his mind ran hastily over his family. Two of the Haymans, he had heard, were in some Yeomanry or other it had always been a pleasant thought, there was a certain distinction

about the Yeomanry; they wore, or used to wear, a blue uniform with silver about it, and rode horses. And Archibald, he remembered, had once on a time joined the Militia, but had given it up because his father, Nicholas, had made such a fuss about his 'wasting his time peacocking about in a uniform.' Recently he had heard somewhere that young Nicholas' eldest, very young Nicholas, had become a Volunteer. 'No,' thought Soames, mounting the stairs slowly, 'there's nothing in that!'

He stood on the landing outside his parents' bed and dressing rooms, debating whether or not to put his nose in and say a reassuring word. Opening the landing window, he listened. The rumble from Piccadilly was all the sound he heard, and with the thought, 'If these motorcars increase, it'll affect house property,' he was about to pass on up to the room always kept ready for him when he heard, distant as yet, the hoarse rushing call of a newsvendor. There it was, and coming past the house! He knocked on his mother's door and went in.

His father was sitting up in bed, with his ears pricked under the white hair which Emily kept so beautifully cut. He looked pink, and extraordinarily clean, in his setting of white sheet and pillow, out of which the points of his high, thin, nightgowned shoulders emerged in small peaks. His eyes alone, grey and distrustful under their withered lids, were moving from the window to Emily, who in a wrapper was walking up and down, squeezing a rubber ball attached to a scent bottle. The room reeked faintly of the eau de Cologne she was spraying.

"All right!" said Soames, "it's not a fire. The Boers have declared war that's all."

Emily stopped her spraying.

"Oh!" was all she said, and looked at James.

Soames, too, looked at his father. He was taking it differently from their expectation, as if some thought, strange to them, were working in him.

"H'm!" he muttered suddenly, "I shan't live to see the end of this."

"Nonsense, James! It'll be over by Christmas."

"What do you know about it?" James answered her with asperity. "It's a pretty mess at this time of night, too!" He lapsed into silence, and his wife and son, as if hypnotised, waited for him to say: 'I can't tell I don't know; I knew how it would be!' But he did not. The grey eyes shifted, evidently seeing nothing in the room; then movement occurred under the bedclothes, and the knees were drawn up suddenly to a great height.

"They ought to send out Roberts. It all comes from that fellow Gladstone and his Majuba."

The two listeners noted something beyond the usual in his voice, something of real anxiety. It was as if he had said: 'I shall never see the old country peaceful and safe again. I shall have to die before I know she's won.' And in spite of the feeling that James must not be encouraged to be fussy, they were touched. Soames went up to the bedside and stroked his father's hand which had emerged from under the bedclothes, long and wrinkled with veins.

"Mark my words!" said James, "consols will go to par. For all I know, Val may go and enlist."

"Oh, come, James!" cried Emily, "you talk as if there were danger."

Her comfortable voice seemed to soothe James for once.

"Well," he muttered, "I told you how it would be. I don't know, I'm sure nobody tells me anything. Are you sleeping here, my boy?"

The crisis was past, he would now compose himself to his normal degree of anxiety; and, assuring his father that he was sleeping in the house, Soames pressed his hand, and went up to his room.

The following afternoon witnessed the greatest crowd Timothy's had known for many a year. On national occasions, such as this, it was, indeed, almost impossible to avoid going there. Not that there was any danger or rather only just enough to make it necessary to assure each other that there was none.

Nicholas was there early. He had seen Soames the night before. Soames had said it was bound to come. This old Kruger was in his dotage why, he must be seventy-five if he was a day!

(Nicholas was eighty-two.) What had Timothy said? He had had a fit after Majuba. These Boers were a grasping lot! The dark-haired Francie, who had arrived on his heels, with the contradictory touch which became the free spirit of a daughter of Roger, chimed in:

"Kettle and pot, Uncle Nicholas. What price the Uitlanders?" What price, indeed! A new expression, and believed to be due to her brother George.

Aunt Juley thought Francie ought not to say such a thing. Dear Mrs. MacAnder's boy, Charlie MacAnder, was one, and no one could call him grasping. At this Francie uttered one of her mots, scandalising, and so frequently repeated:

"Well, his father's a Scotchman, and his mother's a cat."

Aunt Juley covered her ears, too late, but Aunt Hester smiled; as for Nicholas, he pouted with witicism of which he was not the author was hardly to his taste. Just then Marian Tweetyman arrived, followed almost immediately by young Nicholas. On seeing his son, Nicholas rose.

"Well, I must be going," he said, "Nick here will tell you what'll win the race." And with this hit at his eldest, who, as a pillar of accountancy, and director of an insurance company, was no more addicted to sport than his father had ever been, he departed. Dear Nicholas! What race was that? Or was it only one of his jokes? He was a wonderful man for his age! How many lumps would dear Marian take? And how were Giles and Jesse? Aunt Juley supposed their Yeomanry would be very busy now, guarding the coast, though of course the Boers had no ships. But one never knew what the French might do if they had the chance, especially since that dreadful Fashoda scare, which had upset Timothy so terribly that he had made no investments for months afterwards. It was the ingratitude of the Boers that was so dreadful, after everything had been done for them. Dr. Jameson imprisoned, and he was so nice, Mrs. MacAnder had always said. And Sir Alfred Milner sent out to talk to them such a clever man! She didn't know what they wanted.

But at this moment occurred one of those sensations so precious at Timothy's which great occasions sometimes bring forth:

"Miss June Forsyte."

Aunts Juley and Hester were on their feet at once, trembling from smothered resentment, and old affection bubbling up, and pride at the return of a prodigal June! Well, this was a surprise! Dear June after all these years! And how well she was looking! Not changed at all! It was almost on their lips to add, 'And how is your dear grandfather?' forgetting in that giddy moment that poor dear Jolyon had been in his grave for seven years now.

Ever the most courageous and downright of all the Forsytes, June, with her decided chin and her spirited eyes and her hair like flame, sat down, slight and short, on a gilt chair with a beadworked seat, for all the world as if ten years had not elapsed since she had been to see them ten years of travel and independence and devotion to lame ducks. Those ducks of late had been all definitely painters, etchers, or sculptors, so that her impatience with the Forsytes and their hopelessly inartistic outlook had become intense. Indeed, she had almost ceased to believe that her family existed, and looked round her now with a sort of challenging directness which brought exquisite discomfort to the roomful. She had not expected to meet any of them but 'the poor old things'; and why

she had come to see them she hardly knew, except that, while on her way from Oxford Street to a studio in Latimer Road, she had suddenly remembered them with compunction as two longneglected old lame ducks.

Aunt Juley broke the hush again. "We've just been saying, dear, how dreadful it is about these Boers! And what an impudent thing of that old Kruger!"

"Impudent!" said June. "I think he's quite right. What business have we to meddle with them? If he turned out all those wretched Uitlanders it would serve them right. They're only after money."

The silence of sensation was broken by Francie saying:

"What? Are you a proBoer?" (undoubtedly the first use of that expression).

"Well! Why can't we leave them alone?" said June, just as, in the open doorway, the maid said "Mr. Soames Forsyte." Sensation on sensation! Greeting was almost held up by curiosity to see how June and he would take this encounter, for it was shrewdly suspected, if not quite known, that they had not met since that old and lamentable affair of her fiance Bosinney with Soames' wife. They were seen to just touch each other's hands, and look each at the other's left eye only. Aunt Juley came at once to the rescue:

"Dear June is so original. Fancy, Soames, she thinks the Boers are not to blame."

"They only want their independence," said June; "and why shouldn't they have it?"

"Because," answered Soames, with his smile a little on one side, "they happen to have agreed to our suzerainty."

"Suzerainty!" repeated June scornfully; "we shouldn't like anyone's suzerainty over us."

"They got advantages in payment," replied Soames; "a contract is a contract."

"Contracts are not always just," fumed out June, "and when they're not, they ought to be broken. The Boers are much the weaker. We could afford to be generous."

Soames sniffed. "That's mere sentiment," he said.

Aunt Hester, to whom nothing was more awful than any kind of disagreement, here leaned forward and remarked decisively:

"What lovely weather it has been for the time of year?"

But June was not to be diverted.

"I don't know why sentiment should be sneered at. It's the best thing in the world." She looked defiantly round, and Aunt Juley had to intervene again:

"Have you bought any pictures lately, Soames?"

Her incomparable instinct for the wrong subject had not failed her. Soames flushed. To disclose the name of his latest purchases would be like walking into the jaws of disdain. For somehow they all knew of June's predilection for 'genius' not yet on its legs, and her contempt for 'success' unless she had had a finger in securing it.

"One or two," he muttered.

But June's face had changed; the Forsyte within her was seeing its chance. Why should not Soames buy some of the pictures of Eric Cobbyher last lame duck? And she promptly opened her attack: Did Soames know his work? It was so wonderful. He was the coming man.

Oh, yes, Soames knew his work. It was in his view 'splashy,' and would never get hold of the public.

June blazed up.

"Of course it won't; that's the last thing one would wish for. I thought you were a connoisseur, not a picturedealer."

"Of course Soames is a connoisseur," Aunt Juley said hastily; "he has wonderful taste he can always tell beforehand what's going to be successful."

"Oh!" gasped June, and sprang up from the beadcovered chair, "I hate that standard of success. Why can't people buy things because they like them?"

"You mean," said Francie, "because you like them."

And in the slight pause young Nicholas was heard saying gently that Violet (his fourth) was taking lessons in pastel, he didn't know if they were any use.

"Well, goodbye, Auntie," said June; "I must get on," and kissing her aunts, she looked defiantly round the room, said "Goodbye" again, and went. A breeze seemed to pass out with her, as if everyone had sighed.

The third sensation came before anyone had time to speak:

"Mr. James Forsyte."

James came in using a stick slightly and wrapped in a fur coat which gave him a fictitious bulk.

Everyone stood up. James was so old; and he had not been at Timothy's for nearly two years.

"It's hot in here," he said.

Soames divested him of his coat, and as he did so could not help admiring the glossy way his father was turned out. James sat down, all knees, elbows, frockcoat, and long white whiskers.

"What's the meaning of that?" he said.

Though there was no apparent sense in his words, they all knew that he was referring to June. His eyes searched his son's face.

"I thought I'd come and see for myself. What have they answered Kruger?"

Soames took out an evening paper, and read the headline.

"Instant action by our Governmentstate of war existing!"

"Ah!" said James, and sighed. "I was afraid they'd cut and run like old Gladstone. We shall finish with them this time."

All stared at him. James! Always fussy, nervous, anxious! James with his continual, 'I told you how it would be!' and his pessimism, and his cautious investments. There was something uncanny about such resolution in this the oldest living Forsyte.

"Where's Timothy?" said James. "He ought to pay attention to this."

Aunt Juley said she didn't know; Timothy had not said much at lunch today. Aunt Hester rose and threaded her way out of the room, and Francie said rather maliciously:

"The Boers are a hard nut to crack, Uncle James."

"H'm!" muttered James. "Where do you get your information? Nobody tells me."

Young Nicholas remarked in his mild voice that Nick (his eldest) was now going to drill regularly.

"Ah!" muttered James, and stared before himhis thoughts were on Val. "He's got to look after his mother," he said, "he's got no time for drilling and that, with that father of his." This cryptic saying produced silence, until he spoke again.

"What did June want here?" And his eyes rested with suspicion on all of them in turn. "Her father's a rich man now." The conversation turned on Jolyon, and when he had been seen last. It was supposed that he went abroad and saw all sorts of people now that his wife was dead; his watercolours were on the line, and he was a successful man. Francie went so far as to say:

"I should like to see him again; he was rather a dear."

Aunt Juley recalled how he had gone to sleep on the sofa one day, where James was sitting. He had always been very amiable; what did Soames think?

Knowing that Jolyon was Irene's trustee, all felt the delicacy of this question, and looked at Soames with interest. A faint pink had come up in his cheeks.

"He's going grey," he said.

Indeed! Had Soames seen him? Soames nodded, and the pink vanished.

James said suddenly: "Well I don't know, I can't tell."

It so exactly expressed the sentiment of everybody present that there was something behind everything, that nobody responded. But at this moment Aunt Hester returned.

"Timothy," she said in a low voice, "Timothy has bought a map, and he's put in he's put in three flags."

Timothy had! A sigh went round the company.

If Timothy had indeed put in three flags already, well! it showed what the nation could do when it was roused. The war was as good as over.

CHAPTER V

JOLYON FINDS OUT WHERE HE IS

Jolyon stood at the window in Holly's old night nursery, converted into a studio, not because it had a north light, but for its view over the prospect away to the Grand Stand at Epsom. He shifted to the side window which overlooked the stableyard, and whistled down to the dog Balthasar who lay for ever under the clock tower. The old dog looked up and wagged his tail. 'Poor old boy!' thought Jolyon, shifting back to the other window.

He had been restless all this week, since his attempt to prosecute trusteeship, uneasy in his conscience which was ever acute, disturbed in his sense of compassion which was easily excited, and with a queer sensation as if his feeling for beauty had received some definite embodiment. Autumn was getting hold of the old oaktree, its leaves were browning. Sunshine had been plentiful and hot this summer. As with trees, so with men's lives! 'I ought to live long,' thought Jolyon; 'I'm getting mildewed for want of heat. If I can't work, I shall be off to Paris.' But memory of Paris gave him no pleasure. Besides, how could he go? He must stay and see what Soames was going to do. 'I'm her trustee. I can't leave her unprotected,' he thought. It had been striking him as curious how very clearly he could still see Irene in her little drawingroom which he had only twice entered. Her beauty must have a sort of poignant harmony! No literal portrait would ever do her justice; the essence of her wasah I what? The noise of hoofs called him back to the other window. Holly was riding into the yard on her longtailed 'palfrey.' She looked up and he waved to her. She had been rather silent lately; getting old, he supposed, beginning to want her future, as they all didyoungsters!

Time was certainly the devil! And with the feeling that to waste this swifttravelling commodity was unforgivable folly, he took up his brush. But it was no use; he could not concentrate his eyesbesides, the light was going. 'I'll go up to town,' he thought. In the hall a servant met him.

"A lady to see you, sir; Mrs. Heron."

Extraordinary coincidence! Passing into the picturegallery, as it was still called, he saw Irene standing over by the window.

She came towards him saying:

"I've been trespassing; I came up through the coppice and garden. I always used to come that way to see Uncle Jolyon."

"You couldn't trespass here," replied Jolyon; "history makes that impossible. I was just thinking of you."

Irene smiled. And it was as if something shone through; not mere spirituality serene, complete, more alluring.

"History!" she answered; "I once told Uncle Jolyon that love was for ever. Well, it isn't. Only aversion lasts."

Jolyon stared at her. Had she got over Bosinney at last?

"Yes!" he said, "aversion's deeper than love or hate because it's a natural product of the nerves, and we don't change them."

"I came to tell you that Soames has been to see me. He said a thing that frightened me. He said: 'You are still my wife!'"

"What!" ejaculated Jolyon. "You ought not to live alone." And he continued to stare at her, afflicted by the thought that where Beauty was, nothing ever ran quite straight, which, no doubt, was why so many people looked on it as immoral.

"What more?"

"He asked me to shake hands.

"Did you?"

"Yes. When he came in I'm sure he didn't want to; he changed while he was there."

"Ah! you certainly ought not to go on living there alone."

"I know no woman I could ask; and I can't take a lover to order, Cousin Jolyon."

"Heaven forbid!" said Jolyon. "What a damnable position! Will you stay to dinner? No? Well, let me see you back to town; I wanted to go up this evening."

"Truly?"

"Truly. I'll be ready in five minutes."

On that walk to the station they talked of pictures and music, contrasting the English and French characters and the difference in their attitude to Art. But to Jolyon the colours in the hedges of the long straight lane, the twittering of chaffinches who kept pace with them, the perfume of weeds being already burned, the turn of her neck, the fascination of those dark eyes bent on him now and then, the lure of her whole figure, made a deeper impression than the remarks they exchanged. Unconsciously he held himself straighter, walked with a more elastic step.

In the train he put her through a sort of catechism as to what she did with her days.

Made her dresses, shopped, visited a hospital, played her piano, translated from the French.

She had regular work from a publisher, it seemed, which supplemented her income a little. She seldom went out in the evening. "I've been living alone so long, you see, that I don't mind it a bit. I believe I'm naturally solitary."

"I don't believe that," said Jolyon. "Do you know many people?"

"Very few."

At Waterloo they took a hansom, and he drove with her to the door of her mansions. Squeezing her hand at parting, he said:

"You know, you could always come to us at Robin Hill; you must let me know everything that happens. Goodbye, Irene."

"Goodbye," she answered softly.

Jolyon climbed back into his cab, wondering why he had not asked her to dine and go to the theatre with him. Solitary, starved, hungup life that she had! "Hotch Potch Club," he said through the trapdoor. As his hansom debouched on to the Embankment, a man in top hat and overcoat passed, walking quickly, so close to the wall that he seemed to be scraping it.

'By Jove!' thought Jolyon; 'Soames himself! What's he up to now?' And, stopping the cab round the corner, he got out and retraced his steps to where he could see the entrance to the mansions. Soames had halted in front of them, and was looking up at the light in her windows. 'If he goes in,' thought Jolyon, 'what shall I do? What have I the right to do?' What the fellow had said was true. She was still his wife, absolutely without protection from annoyance! 'Well, if he goes in,' he thought, 'I follow.' And he began moving towards the mansions. Again Soames advanced; he was in the very entrance now. But suddenly he stopped, spun round on his heel, and came back towards the river. 'What now?' thought Jolyon. 'In a dozen steps he'll recognise me.' And he turned tail. His cousin's footsteps kept pace with his own. But he reached his cab, and got in before Soames had turned the corner. "Go on!" he said through the trap. Soames' figure ranged up alongside.

"Hansom!" he said. "Engaged? Hallo!"

"Hallo!" answered Jolyon. "You?"

The quick suspicion on his cousin's face, white in the lamplight, decided him.

"I can give you a lift," he said, "if you're going West."

"Thanks," answered Soames, and got in.

"I've been seeing Irene," said Jolyon when the cab had started.

"Indeed!"

"You went to see her yesterday yourself, I understand."

"I did," said Soames; "she's my wife, you know."

The tone, the halflifted sneering lip, roused sudden anger in Jolyon; but he subdued it.

"You ought to know best," he said, "but if you want a divorce it's not very wise to go seeing her, is it? One can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds?"

"You're very good to warn me," said Soames, "but I have not made up my mind."

"She has," said Jolyon, looking straight before him; "you can't take things up, you know, as they were twelve years ago."

"That remains to be seen."

"Look here!" said Jolyon, "she's in a damnable position, and I am the only person with any legal say in her affairs."

"Except myself," retorted Soames, "who am also in a damnable position. Hers is what she made for herself; mine what she made for me. I am not at all sure that in her own interests I shan't require her to return to me."

"What!" exclaimed Jolyon; and a shiver went through his whole body.

"I don't know what you may mean by 'what,'" answered Soames coldly; "your say in her affairs is confined to paying out her income; please bear that in mind. In choosing not to disgrace her by a divorce, I retained my rights, and, as I say, I am not at all sure that I shan't require to exercise them."

"My God!" ejaculated Jolyon, and he uttered a short laugh.

"Yes," said Soames, and there was a deadly quality in his voice. "I've not forgotten the nickname your father gave me, 'The man of property'! I'm not called names for nothing."

"This is fantastic," murmured Jolyon. Well, the fellow couldn't force his wife to live with him. Those days were past, anyway! And he looked around at Soames with the thought: 'Is he real, this man?' But Soames looked very real, sitting square yet almost elegant with the clipped moustache on his pale face, and a tooth showing where a lip was lifted in a fixed smile. There was a long silence, while Jolyon thought: 'Instead of helping her, I've made things worse.' Suddenly Soames said:

"It would be the best thing that could happen to her in many ways."

At those words such a turmoil began taking place in Jolyon that he could barely sit still in the cab. It was as if he were boxed up with hundreds of thousands of his countrymen, boxed up with that something in the national character which had always been to him revolting, something which he knew to be extremely natural and yet which seemed to him inexplicable their intense belief in contracts and vested rights, their complacent sense of virtue in the exaction of those rights. Here beside him in the cab was the very embodiment, the corporeal sum as it were, of the possessive instinct his own kinsman, too! It was uncanny and intolerable! 'But there's something more in it than that!' he thought with a sick feeling. 'The dog, they say, returns to his vomit! The sight of her has reawakened something. Beauty! The devil's in it!'

"As I say," said Soames, "I have not made up my mind. I shall be obliged if you will kindly leave her quite alone."

Jolyon bit his lips; he who had always hated rows almost welcomed the thought of one now.

"I can give you no such promise," he said shortly.

"Very well," said Soames, "then we know where we are. I'll get down here." And stopping the cab he got out without word or sign of farewell. Jolyon travelled on to his Club.

The first news of the war was being called in the streets, but he paid no attention. What could he do to help her? If only his father were alive! He could have done so much! But why could he not do all that his father could have done? Was he not old enough? turned fifty and twice married, with grownup daughters and a son. 'Queer,' he thought. 'If she were plain I shouldn't be thinking twice about it. Beauty is the devil, when you're sensitive to it!' And into the Club readingroom he went with a disturbed heart. In that very room he and Bosinney had talked one summer afternoon; he well remembered even now the disguised and secret lecture he had given that young man in the interests of June, the diagnosis of the Forsytes he had hazarded; and how he had wondered what sort of woman it was he was warning him against. And now! He was almost in want of a warning himself. 'It's deuced funny!' he thought, 'really deuced funny!'

CHAPTER VI

SOAMES DISCOVERS WHAT HE WANTS

It is so much easier to say, "Then we know where we are," than to mean anything particular by the words. And in saying them Soames did but vent the jealous rankling of his instincts. He got out of the cab in a state of wary anger with himself for not having seen Irene, with Jolyon for having seen her; and now with his inability to tell exactly what he wanted.

He had abandoned the cab because he could not bear to remain seated beside his cousin, and walking briskly eastwards he thought: 'I wouldn't trust that fellow Jolyon a yard. Once outcast, always outcast!' The chap had a natural sympathy with laxity (he had shied at the word sin, because it was too melodramatic for use by a Forsyte).

Indecision in desire was to him a new feeling. He was like a child between a promised toy and an old one which had been taken away from him; and he was astonished at himself. Only last Sunday desire had seemed simple just his freedom and Annette. 'I'll go and dine there,' he thought. To see her might bring back his singleness of intention, calm his exasperation, clear his mind.

The restaurant was fairly full of good many foreigners and folk whom, from their appearance, he took to be literary or artistic. Scraps of conversation came his way through the clatter of plates and glasses. He distinctly heard the Boers sympathised with, the British Government blamed. 'Don't think much of their clientele,' he thought. He went stolidly through his dinner and special coffee without making his presence known, and when at last he had finished, was careful not to be seen going towards the sanctum of Madame Lamotte. They were, as he entered, having supper such a much nicer looking supper than the dinner he had eaten that he felt a kind of grief and they greeted him with a surprise so seemingly genuine that he thought with sudden suspicion: 'I believe they knew I was here all the time.' He gave Annette a look furtive and searching. So pretty, seemingly so candid; could she be angling for him? He turned to Madame Lamotte and said:

"I've been dining here."

Really! If she had only known! There were dishes she could have recommended; what a pity! Soames was confirmed in his suspicion. 'I must look out what I'm doing!' he thought sharply.

"Another little cup of very special coffee, monsieur; a liqueur, Grand Marnier?" and Madame Lamotte rose to order these delicacies.

Alone with Annette Soames said, "Well, Annette?" with a defensive little smile about his lips.

The girl blushed. This, which last Sunday would have set his nerves tingling, now gave him much the same feeling a man has when a dog that he owns wriggles and looks at him. He had a curious sense of power, as if he could have said to her, 'Come and kiss me,' and she would have come. And yet it was strange but there seemed another face and form in the room too; and the itch in his nerves, was it for that or for this? He jerked his head towards the restaurant and said: "You have some queer customers. Do you like this life?"

Annette looked up at him for a moment, looked down, and played with her fork.

"No," she said, "I do not like it."

'I've got her,' thought Soames, 'if I want her. But do I want her?' She was graceful, she was pretty very pretty; she was fresh, she had taste of a kind. His eyes travelled round the little room; but the eyes of his mind went another journey a halflight, and silvery walls, a satinwood piano, a woman standing against it, reined back as it were from him a woman with white shoulders that he knew, and dark eyes that he had sought to know, and hair like dull dark amber. And as in an artist who strives for the unrealisable and is ever thirsty, so there rose in him at that moment the thirst of the old passion he had never satisfied.

"Well," he said calmly, "you're young. There's everything before you."

Annette shook her head.

"I think sometimes there is nothing before me but hard work. I am not so in love with work as mother."

"Your mother is a wonder," said Soames, faintly mocking; "she will never let failure lodge in her house."

Annette sighed. "It must be wonderful to be rich."

"Oh! You'll be rich some day," answered Soames, still with that faint mockery; "don't be afraid."

Annette shrugged her shoulders. "Monsieur is very kind." And between her pouting lips she put a chocolate.

'Yes, my dear,' thought Soames, 'they're very pretty.'

Madame Lamotte, with coffee and liqueur, put an end to that colloquy. Soames did not stay long.

Outside in the streets of Soho, which always gave him such a feeling of property improperly owned, he mused. If only Irene had given him a son, he wouldn't now be squirming after women! The thought had jumped out of its little dark sentrybox in his inner consciousness. A sonsomething to look forward to, something to make the rest of life worth while, something to leave himself to, some perpetuity of self. 'If I had a son,' he thought bitterly, 'a proper legal son, I could make shift to go on as I used. One woman's much the same as another, after all.' But as he walked he shook his head. No! One woman was not the same as another. Many a time had he tried to think that in the old days of his thwarted married life; and he had always failed. He was failing now. He was trying to think Annette the same as that other. But she was not, she had not the lure of that old passion. 'And Irene's my wife,' he thought, 'my legal wife. I have done nothing to put her away from me. Why shouldn't she come back to me? It's the right thing, the lawful thing. It makes no scandal, no disturbance. If it's disagreeable to her but why should it be? I'm not a leper, and she's no longer in love!' Why should he be put to the shifts and the sordid disgraces and the lurking defeats of the Divorce Court, when there she was like an empty house only waiting to be retaken into use and possession by him who legally owned her? To one so secretive as Soames the thought of reentry into quiet possession of his own property with nothing given away to the world was intensely alluring. 'No,' he mused, 'I'm glad I went to see that girl. I know now what I want most. If only Irene will come back I'll be as considerate as she wishes; she could live her own life; but perhaps perhaps she would come round to me.' There was a lump in his throat. And doggedly along by the railings of the Green Park, towards his father's house, he went, trying to tread on his shadow walking before him in the brilliant moonlight.