Old Jolyon's Peccadillo

By

John Galsworthy

OLD JOLYON'S PECCADILLO

Old Jolyon came out of Lord's cricket ground that same afternoon with the intention of going home. He had not reached Hamilton Terrace before he changed his mind, and hailing a cab, gave the driver an address in Wistaria Avenue. He had taken a resolution.

June had hardly been at home at all that week; she had given him nothing of her company for a long time past, not, in fact, since she had become engaged to Bosinney. He never asked her for her company. It was not his habit to ask people for things! She had just that one idea nowBosinney and his affairsand she left him stranded in his great house, with a parcel of servants, and not a soul to speak to from morning to night. His Club was closed for cleaning; his Boards in recess; there was nothing, therefore, to take him into the City. June had wanted him to go away; she would not go herself, because Bosinney was in London.

But where was he to go by himself? He could not go abroad alone; the sea upset his liver; he hated hotels. Roger went to a hydropathiche was not going to begin that at his time of life, those newfangled places we're all humbug!

With such formulas he clothed to himself the desolation of his spirit; the lines down his face deepening, his eyes day by day looking forth with the melancholy which sat so strangely on a face wont to be strong and serene.

And so that afternoon he took this journey through St. John's Wood, in the goldenlight that sprinkled the rounded green bushes of the acacia's before the little houses, in the summer sunshine that seemed holding a revel over the little gardens; and he looked about him with interest; for this was a district which no Forsyte entered without open disapproval and secret curiosity.

His cab stopped in front of a small house of that peculiar buff colour which implies a long immunity from paint. It had an outer gate, and a rustic approach.

He stepped out, his bearing extremely composed; his massive head, with its drooping moustache and wings of white hair, very upright, under an excessively large top hat; his glance firm, a little angry. He had been driven into this!

"Mrs. Jolyon Forsyte at home?"

"Oh, yes sir!what name shall I say, if you please, sir?"

Old Jolyon could not help twinkling at the little maid as he gave his name. She seemed to him such a funny little toad!

And he followed her through the dark hall, into a small double, drawingroom, where the furniture was covered in chintz, and the little maid placed him in a chair.

"They're all in the garden, sir; if you'll kindly take a seat, I'll tell them."

Old Jolyon sat down in the chintzcovered chair, and looked around him. The whole place seemed to him, as he would have expressed it, pokey; there was a certainhe could not tell exactly whatair of shabbiness, or rather of making two ends meet, about everything. As far as he could see, not a single piece of furniture was worth a fivepound note. The walls, distempered rather a long time ago, were decorated with watercolour sketches; across the ceiling meandered a long crack.

These little houses were all old, secondrate concerns; he should hope the rent was under a hundred a year; it hurt him more than he could have said, to think of a Forsytehis own son living in such a place.

The little maid came back. Would he please to go down into the garden?

Old Jolyon marched out through the French windows. In descending the steps he noticed that they wanted painting.

Young Jolyon, his wife, his two children, and his dog Balthasar, were all out there under a peartree.

This walk towards them was the most courageous act of old Jolyon's life; but no muscle of his face moved, no nervous gesture betrayed him. He kept his deepset eyes steadily on the enemy.

In those two minutes he demonstrated to perfection all that unconscious soundness, balance, and vitality of fibre that made, of him and so many others of his class the core of the nation. In the unostentatious conduct of their own affairs, to the neglect of everything else, they typified the essential individualism, born in the Briton from the natural isolation of his country's life.

The dog Balthasar sniffed round the edges of his trousers; this friendly and cynical mongreloffspring of a liaison between a Russian poodle and a foxterrierhad a nose for the unusual.

The strange greetings over, old Jolyon seated himself in a wicker chair, and his two grandchildren, one on each side of his knees, looked at him silently, never having seen so old a man.

They were unlike, as though recognising the difference set between them by the circumstances of their births. Jolly, the child of sin, pudgyfaced, with his towcoloured

hair brushed off his forehead, and a dimple in his chin, had an air of stubborn amiability, and the eyes of a Forsyte; little Holly, the child of wedlock, was a darkskinned, solemn soul, with her mother's, grey and wistful eyes.

The dog Balthasar, having walked round the three small flowerbeds, to show his extreme contempt for things at large, had also taken a seat in front of old Jolyon, and, oscillating a tail curled by Nature tightly over his back, was staring up with eyes that did not blink.

Even in the garden, that sense of things being pokey haunted old Jolyon; the wicker chair creaked under his weight; the gardenbeds looked 'daverdy'; on the far side, under the smutstained wall, cats had made a path.

While he and his grandchildren thus regarded each other with the peculiar scrutiny, curious yet trustful, that passes between the very young and the very old, young Jolyon watched his wife.

The colour had deepened in her thin, oval face, with its straight brows, and large, grey eyes. Her hair, brushed in fine, high curves back from her forehead, was going grey, like his own, and this greyness made the sudden vivid colour in her cheeks painfully pathetic.

The look on her face, such as he had never seen there before, such as she had always hidden from him, was full of secret resentments, and longings, and fears. Her eyes, under their twitching brows, stared painfully. And she was silent.

Jolly alone sustained the conversation; he had many possessions, and was anxious that his unknown friend with extremely large moustaches, and hands all covered with blue veins, who sat with legs crossed like his own father (a habit he was himself trying to acquire), should know it; but being a Forsyte, though not yet quite eight years old, he made no mention of the thing at the moment dearest to his hearta camp of soldiers in a shopwindow, which his father had promised to buy. No doubt it seemed to him too precious; a tempting of Providence to mention it yet.

And the sunlight played through the leaves on that little party of the three generations grouped tranquilly under the peartree, which had long borne no fruit.

Old Jolyon's furrowed face was reddening patchily, as old men's faces redden in the sun. He took one of Jolly's hands in his own; the boy climbed on to his knee; and little Holly, mesmerized by this sight, crept up to them; the sound of the dog Balthasar's scratching arose rhythmically.

Suddenly young Mrs. Jolyon got up and hurried indoors. A minute later her husband muttered an excuse, and followed. Old Jolyon was left alone with his grandchildren.

And Nature with her quaint irony began working in him one of her strange revolutions, following her cyclic laws into the depths of his heart. And that tenderness for little children, that passion for the beginnings of life which had once made him forsake his son and follow June, now worked in him to forsake June and follow these littler things. Youth, like a flame, burned ever in his breast, and to youth he turned, to the round little limbs, so reckless, that wanted care, to the small round faces so unreasonably solemn or bright, to the treble tongues, and the shrill, chuckling laughter, to the insistent tugging hands, and the feel of small bodies against his legs, to all that was young and young, and once more young. And his eyes grew soft, his voice, and thinveined hands soft, and soft his heart within him. And to those small creatures he became at once a place of pleasure, a place where they were secure, and could talk and laugh and play; till, like sunshine, there radiated from old Jolyon's wicker chair the perfect gaiety of three hearts.

But with young Jolyon following to his wife's room it was different.

He found her seated on a chair before her dressingglass, with her hands before her face.

Her shoulders were shaking with sobs. This passion of hers for suffering was mysterious to him. He had been through a hundred of these moods; how he had survived them he never knew, for he could never believe they were moods, and that the last hour of his partnership had not struck.

In the night she would be sure to throw her arms round his neck and say: "Oh! Jo, how I make you suffer!" as she had done a hundred times before.

He reached out his hand, and, unseen, slipped his razorcase into his pocket. 'I cannot stay here,' he thought, 'I must go down!' Without a word he left the room, and went back to the lawn.

Old Jolyon had little Holly on his knee; she had taken possession of his watch; Jolly, very red in the face, was trying to show that he could stand on his head. The dog Balthasar, as close as he might be to the teatable, had fixed his eyes on the cake.

Young Jolyon felt a malicious desire to cut their enjoyment short.

What business had his father to come and upset his wife like this? It was a shock, after all these years! He ought to have known; he ought to have given them warning; but when did a Forsyte ever imagine that his conduct could upset anybody! And in his thoughts he did old Jolyon wrong.

He spoke sharply to the children, and told them to go in to their tea. Greatly surprised, for they had never heard their father speak sharply before, they went off, hand in hand, little Holly looking back over her shoulder.

Young Jolyon poured out the tea.

"My wife's not the thing today," he said, but he knew well enough that his father had penetrated the cause of that sudden withdrawal, and almost hated the old man for sitting there so calmly.

"You've got a nice little house here," said old Jolyon with a shrewd look; "I suppose you've taken a lease of it!"

Young Jolyon nodded.

"I don't like the neighbourhood," said old Jolyon; "a ramshackle lot."

Young Jolyon replied: "Yes, we're a ramshackle lot.'"

The silence was now only broken by the sound of the dog Balthasar's scratching.

Old Jolyon said simply: "I suppose I oughtn't to have come here, Jo; but I get so lonely!"

At these words young Jolyon got up and put his hand on his father's shoulder.

In the next house someone was playing over and over again: 'La Donna mobile' on an untuned piano; and the little garden had fallen into shade, the sun now only reached the wall at the end, whereon basked a crouching cat, her yellow eyes turned sleepily down on the dog Balthasar. There was a drowsy hum of very distant traffic; the creepered trellis round the garden shut out everything but sky, and house, and peartree, with its top branches still gilded by the sun.

For some time they sat there, talking but little. Then old Jolyon rose to go, and not a word was said about his coming again.

He walked away very sadly. What a poor miserable place; and he thought of the great, empty house in Stanhope Gate, fit residence for a Forsyte, with its huge billiardroom and drawingroom that no one entered from one week's end to another.

That woman, whose face he had rather liked, was too thinskinned by half; she gave Jo a bad time he knew! And those sweet children! Ah! what a piece of awful folly!

He walked towards the Edgware Road, between rows of little houses, all suggesting to him (erroneously no doubt, but the prejudices of a Forsyte are sacred) shady histories of some sort or kind.

Society, forsooth, the chattering hags and jackanapeshad set themselves up to pass judgment on his flesh and blood! A parcel of old women! He stumped his umbrella on

the ground, as though to drive it into the heart of that unfortunate body, which had dared to ostracize his son and his son's son, in whom he could have lived again!

He stumped his umbrella fiercely; yet he himself had followed Society's behaviour for fifteen yearshad only today been false to it!

He thought of June, and her dead mother, and the whole story, with all his old bitterness. A wretched business!

He was a long time reaching Stanhope Gate, for, with native perversity, being extremely tired, he walked the whole way.

After washing his hands in the lavatory downstairs, he went to the diningroom to wait for dinner, the only room he used when June was outit was less lonely so. The evening paper had not yet come; he had finished the Times, there was therefore nothing to do.

The room faced the backwater of traffic, and was very silent. He disliked dogs, but a dog even would have been company. His gaze, travelling round the walls, rested on a picture entitled: 'Group of Dutch fishing boats at sunset'; the chef d'oeuvre of his collection. It gave him no pleasure. He closed his eyes. He was lonely! He oughtn't to complain, he knew, but he couldn't help it: He was a poor thinghad always been a poor thingno pluck! Such was his thought.

The butler came to lay the table for dinner, and seeing his master apparently asleep, exercised extreme caution in his movements. This bearded man also wore a moustache, which had given rise to grave doubts in the minds of many membersof the family, especially those who, like Soames, had been to public schools, and were accustomed to niceness in such matters. Could he really be considered a butler? Playful spirits alluded to him as: 'Uncle Jolyon's Nonconformist'; George, the acknowledged wag, had named him: 'Sankey.'

He moved to and fro between the great polished sideboard and the great polished table inimitably sleek and soft.

Old Jolyon watched him, feigning sleep. The fellow was a sneakhe had always thought sowho cared about nothing but rattling through his work, and getting out to his betting or his woman or goodness knew what! A slug! Fat too! And didn't care a pin about his master!

But then against his will, came one of those moments of philosophy which made old Jolyon different from other Forsytes:

After all why should the man care? He wasn't paid to care, and why expect it? In this world people couldn't look for affection unless they paid for it. It might be different in the nexthe didn't knowcouldn't tell! And again he shut his eyes.

Relentless and stealthy, the butler pursued his labours, taking things from the various compartments of the sideboard. His back seemed always turned to old Jolyon; thus, he robbed his operations of the unseemliness of being carried on in his master's presence; now and then he furtively breathed on the silver, and wiped it with a piece of chamois leather. He appeared to pore over the quantities of wine in the decanters, which he carried carefully and rather high, letting his heard droop over them protectingly. When he had finished, he stood for over a minute watching his master, and in his greenish eyes there was a look of contempt:

After all, this master of his was an old buffer, who hadn't much left in him!

Soft as a tomcat, he crossed the room to press the bell. His orders were 'dinner at seven.' What if his master were asleep; he would soon have him out of that; there was the night to sleep in! He had himself to think of, for he was due at his Club at halfpast eight!

In answer to the ring, appeared a page boy with a silver soup tureen. The butler took it from his hands and placed it on the table, then, standing by the open door, as though about to usher company into the room, he said in a solemn voice:

"Dinner is on the table, sir!"

Slowly old Jolyon got up out of his chair, and sat down at the table to eat his dinner.

PLANS OF THE HOUSE

Forsytes, as is generally admitted, have shells, like that extremely useful little animal which is made into Turkish delight, in other words, they are never seen, or if seen would not be recognised, without habitats, composed of circumstance, property, acquaintances, and wives, which seem to move along with them in their passage through a world composed of thousands of other Forsytes with their habitats. Without a habitat a Forsyte is inconceivablehe would be like a novel without a plot, which is wellknown to be an anomaly.

To Forsyte eyes Bosinney appeared to have no habitat, he seemed one of those rare and unfortunate men who go through life surrounded by circumstance, property, acquaintances, and wives that do not belong to them.

His rooms in Sloane Street, on the top floor, outside which, on a plate, was his name, 'Philip Baynes Bosinney, Architect,' were not those of a Forsyte.He had no sittingroom apart from his office, but a large recess had been screened off to conceal the necessaries of lifea couch, an easy chair, his pipes, spirit case, novels and slippers. The business part of the room had the usual furniture; an open cupboard with pigeonholes, a round oak table, a folding washstand, some hard chairs, a standing desk of large dimensions covered with drawings and designs. June had twice been to tea there under the chaperonage of his aunt.

He was believed to have a bedroom at the back.

As far as the family had been able to ascertain his income, it consisted of two consulting appointments at twenty pounds a year, together with an odd fee once in a way, andmore worthy itema private annuity under his father's will of one hundred and fifty pounds a year.

What had transpired concerning that father was not so reassuring. It appeared that he had been a Lincolnshire country doctor of Cornish extraction, striking appearance, and Byronic tendenciesa wellknown figure, in fact, in his county. Bosinney's uncle by marriage, Baynes, of Baynes and Bildeboy, a Forsyte in instincts if not in name, had but little that was worthy to relate of his brotherinlaw.

"An odd fellow!' he would say: 'always spoke of his three eldest boys as 'good creatures, but so dull'; they're all doing capitally in the Indian Civil! Philip was the only one he liked. I've heard him talk in the queerest way; he once said to me: 'My dear fellow, never let your poor wife know what you're thinking of! But I didn't follow his advice; not I! An eccentric man! He would say to Phil: 'Whether you live like a gentleman or not, my boy, be sure you die like one! and he had himself embalmed in a frock coat suit, with a satin cravat and a diamond pin. Oh, quite an original, I can assure you!"

Of Bosinney himself Baynes would speak warmly, with a certain compassion: "He's got a streak of his father's Byronism. Why, look at the way he threw up his chances when he left my office; going off like that for six months with a knapsack, and all for what?to study foreign architectureforeign! What could he expect? And there he isa clever young fellowdoesn't make his hundred a year! Now this engagement is the best thing that could have happenedkeep him steady; he's one of those that go to bed all day and stay up all night, simply because they've no method; but no vice about himnot an ounce of vice. Old Forsyte's a rich man!"

Mr. Baynes made himself extremely pleasant to June, who frequently visited his house in Lowndes Square at this period.

"This house of your cousin'swhat a capital man of businessis the very thing for Philip," he would say to her; "you mustn't expect to see too much of him just now, my dear young lady. The good causethe good cause! The young man must make his way. When I was his age I was at work day and night. My dear wife used to say to me, 'Bobby, don't work too hard, think of your health'; but I never spared myself!"

June had complained that her lover found no time to come to Stanhope Gate.

The first time he came again they had not been together a quarter of an hour before, by one of those coincidences of which she was a mistress, Mrs. Septimus Small arrived. Thereon Bosinney rose and hid himself, according to previous arrangement, in the little study, to wait for her departure.

"My dear," said Aunt Juley, "how thin he is! I've often noticed it with engaged people; but you mustn't let it get worse. There's Barlow's extract of veal; it did your Uncle Swithin a lot of good."

June, her little figure erect before the hearth, her small face quivering grimly, for she regarded her aunt's untimely visit in the light of a personal injury, replied with scorn:

"It's because he's busy; people who can do anything worth doing are never fat!"

Aunt Juley pouted; she herself had always been thin, but the only pleasure she derived from the fact was the opportunity of longing to be stouter.

"I don't think," she said mournfully, "that you ought to let them call him 'The Buccaneer'; people might think it odd, now that he's going to build a house for Soames. I do hope he will be careful; it's so important for him. Soames has such good taste!"

"Taste!" cried June, flaring up at once; "wouldn't give that for his taste, or any of the family's!"

Mrs. Small was taken aback.

"Your Uncle Swithin," she said, "always had beautiful taste! And Soames's little house is lovely; you don't mean to say you don't think so!"

"H'mph!" said June, "that's only because Irene's there!"

Aunt Juley tried to say something pleasant:

"And how will dear Irene like living in the country?"

June gazed at her intently, with a look in her eyes as if her conscience had suddenly leaped up into them; it passed; and an even more intent look took its place, as if she had stared that conscience out of countenance. She replied imperiously:

"Of course she'll like it; why shouldn't she?"

Mrs. Small grew nervous.

"I didn't know," she said; "I thought she mightn't like to leave her friends. Your Uncle James says she doesn't take enough interest in life. We thinkI mean Timothy thinksshe ought to go out more. I expect you'll miss her very much!"

June clasped her hands behind her neck.

"I do wish," she cried, "Uncle Timothy wouldn't talk about what doesn't concern him!"

Aunt Juley rose to the full height of her tall figure.

"He never talks about what doesn't concern him," she said.

June was instantly compunctious; she ran to her aunt and kissed her.

"I'm very sorry, auntie; but I wish they'd let Irene alone."

Aunt Juley, unable to think of anything further on the subject that would be suitable, was silent; she prepared for departure, hooking her black silk cape across her chest, and, taking up her green reticule:

"And how is your dear grandfather?" she asked in the hall, "I expect he's very lonely now that all your time is taken up with Mr. Bosinney."

She bent and kissed her niece hungrily, and with little, mincing steps passed away.

The tears sprang up in June's eyes; running into the little study, where Bosinney was sitting at the table drawing birds on the back of an envelope, she sank down by his side and cried:

"Oh, Phil! it's all so horrid!" Her heart was as warm as the colour of her hair.

On the following Sunday morning, while Soames was shaving, a message was brought him to the effect that Mr. Bosinney was below, and would be glad to see him. Opening the door into his wife's room, he said:

"Bosinney's downstairs. Just go and entertain him while I finish shaving. I'll be down in a minute. It's about the plans, I expect."

Irene looked at him, without reply, put the finishing touch to her dress and went downstairs. He could not make her out about this house. She had said nothing against it, and, as far as Bosinney was concerned, seemed friendly enough.

From the window of his dressingroom he could see them talking together in the little court below. He hurried on with his shaving, cutting his chin twice. He heard them laugh, and thought to himself: "Well, they get on all right, anyway!"

As he expected, Bosinney had come round to fetch him to look at the plans.

He took his hat and went over.

The plans were spread on the oak table in the architect's room; and pale, imperturbable, inquiring, Soames bent over them for a long time without speaking.

He said at last in a puzzled voice:

"It's an odd sort of house!"

A rectangular house of two stories was designed in a quadrangle round a coveredin court. This court, encircled by a gallery on the upper floor, was roofed with a glass roof, supported by eight columns running up from the ground.

It was indeed, to Forsyte eyes, an odd house.

"There's a lot of room cut to waste," pursued Soames.

Bosinney began to walk about, and Soames did not like the expression on his face.

"The principle of this house," said the architect, "was that you should have room to breathelike a gentleman!"

Soames extended his finger and thumb, as if measuring the extent of the distinction he should acquire; and replied:

"Oh! yes; I see."

The peculiar look came into Bosinney's face which marked all his enthusiasms.

"I've tried to plan you a house here with some selfrespect of its own. If you don't like it, you'd better say so. It's certainly the last thing to be consideredwho wants selfrespect in a house, when you can squeeze in an extra lavatory?" He put his finger suddenly down on the left division of the centre oblong: "You can swing a cat here. This is for your pictures, divided from this court by curtains; draw them back and you'll have a space of fiftyone by twentythree six. This doublefaced stove in the centre, here, looks one way towards the court, one way towards the picture room; this end wall is all window; You've a southeast light from that, a north light from the court. The rest of your pictures you can hang round the gallery upstairs, or in the other rooms." "In architecture," he went onand though looking at Soames he did not seem to see him, which gave Soames an unpleasant feeling"as in life, you'll get no selfrespect without regularity. Fellows tell you that's old fashioned. It appears to be peculiar any way; it never occurs to us to embody the main principle of life in our buildings; we load our houses with decoration, gimcracks, corners, anything to distract the eye. On the contrary the eye should rest; get your effects with a few strong lines. The whole thing is regularity there's no selfrespect without it."

Soames, the unconscious ironist, fixed his gaze on Bosinney's tie, which was far from being in the perpendicular; he was unshaven too, and his dress not remarkable for order. Architecture appeared to have exhausted his regularity.

"Won't it look like a barrack?" he inquired.

He did not at once receive a reply.

"I can see what it is," said Bosinney, "you want one of Littlemaster's housesone of the pretty and commodious sort, where the servants will live in garrets, and the front door be sunk so that you may come up again. By all means try Littlemaster, you'll find him a capital fellow, I've known him all my life!"

Soames was alarmed. He had really been struck by the plans, and the concealment of his satisfaction had been merely instinctive. It was difficult for him to pay a compliment. He despised people who were lavish with their praises.

He found himself now in the embarrassing position of one who must pay a compliment or run the risk of losing a good thing. Bosinney was just the fellow who might tear up the plans and refuse to act for him; a kind of grownup child!

This grownup childishness, to which he felt so superior, exercised a peculiar and almost mesmeric effect on Soames, for he had never felt anything like it in himself.

"Well," he stammered at last, "it'sit's, certainly original."

He had such a private distrust and even dislike of the word 'original' that he felt he had not really given himself away by this remark.

Bosinney seemed pleased. It was the sort of thing that would please a fellow like that! And his success encouraged Soames.

"It'sa big place," he said.

"Space, air, light," he heard Bosinney murmur, "you can't live like a gentleman in one of Littlemaster'she builds for manufacturers."

Soames made a deprecating movement; he had been identified with a gentleman; not for a good deal of money now would he be classed with manufacturers. But his innate distrust of general principles revived. What the deuce was the good of talking about regularity and selfrespect? It looked to him as if the house would be cold.

"Irene can't stand the cold!" he said.

"Ah!" said Bosinney sarcastically. "Your wife? She doesn't like the cold? I'll see to that; she shan't be cold. Look here!" he pointed, to four marks at regular intervals on the walls of the court. "I've given you hotwater pipes in aluminium casings; you can get them with very good designs."

Soames looked suspiciously at these marks.

"It's all very well, all this," he said, "but what's it going to cost?"

The architect took a sheet of paper from his pocket:

"The house, of course, should be built entirely of stone, but, as I thought you wouldn't stand that, I've compromised for a facing. It ought to have a copper roof, but I've made it green slate. As it is, including metal work, it'll cost you eight thousand five hundred."

"Eight thousand five hundred?" said Soames. "Why, I gave you an outside limit of eight!"

"Can't be done for a penny less," replied Bosinney coolly.

"You must take it or leave it!"

It was the only way, probably, that such a proposition could have been made to Soames. He was nonplussed. Conscience told him to throw the whole thing up. But the design was good, and he knew itthere was completeness about it, and dignity; the servants' apartments were excellent too. He would gain credit by living in a house like thatwith such individual features, yet perfectly wellarranged.

He continued poring over the plans, while Bosinney went into his bedroom to shave and dress.

The two walked back to Montpellier Square in silence, Soames watching him out of the corner of his eye.

The Buccaneer was rather a goodlooking fellowso he thoughtwhen he was properly got up.

Irene was bending over her flowers when the two men came in.

She spoke of sending across the Park to fetch June.

"No, no," said Soames, "we've still got business to talk over!"

At lunch he was almost cordial, and kept pressing Bosinney to eat. He was pleased to see the architect in such high spirits, and left him to spend the afternoon with Irene, while he stole off to his pictures, after his Sunday habit. At teatime he came down to the drawingroom, and found them talking, as he expressed it, nineteen to the dozen.

Unobserved in the doorway, he congratulated himself that things were taking the right turn. It was lucky she and Bosinney got on; she seemed to be falling into line with the idea of the new house.

Quiet meditation among his pictures had decided him to spring the five hundred if necessary; but he hoped that the afternoon might have softened Bosinney's estimates. It was so purely a matter which Bosinney could remedy if he liked; there must be a dozen ways in which he could cheapen the production of a house without spoiling the effect.

He awaited, therefore, his opportunity till Irene was handing the architect his first cup of tea. A chink of sunshine through the lace of the blinds warmed her cheek, shone in the gold of her hair, and in her soft eyes. Possibly the same gleam deepened Bosinney's colour, gave the rather startled look to his face.

Soames hated sunshine, and he at once got up, to draw the blind. Then he took his own cup of tea from his wife, and said, more coldly than he had intended:

"Can't you see your way to do it for eight thousand after all? There must be a lot of little things you could alter."

Bosinney drank off his tea at a gulp, put down his cup, and answered:

"Not one!"

Soames saw that his suggestion had touched some unintelligible point of personal vanity.

"Well," he agreed, with sulky resignation; "you must have it your own way, I suppose."

A few minutes later Bosinney rose to go, and Soames rose too, to see him off the premises. The architect seemed in absurdly high spirits. After watching him walk away at a swinging pace, Soames returned moodily to the drawingroom, where Irene was putting away the music, and, moved by an uncontrollable spasm of curiosity, he asked:

"Well, what do you think of 'The Buccaneer'?"

He looked at the carpet while waiting for her answer, and he had to wait some time.

"I don't know," she said at last.

"Do you think he's goodlooking?"

Irene smiled. And it seemed to Soames that she was mocking him.

"Yes," she answered; "very."

DEATH OF AUNT ANN

There came a morning at the end of September when Aunt Ann was unable to take from Smither's hands the insignia of personal dignity. After one look at the old face, the doctor, hurriedly sent for, announced that Miss Forsyte had passed away in her sleep.

Aunts Juley and Hester were overwhelmed by the shock. They had never imagined such an ending. Indeed, it is doubtful whether they had ever realized that an ending was bound to come. Secretly they felt it unreasonable of Ann to have left them like this without a word, without even a struggle. It was unlike her.

Perhaps what really affected them so profoundly was the thought that a Forsyte should have let go her grasp on life. If one, then why not all!

It was a full hour before they could make up their minds to tell Timothy. If only it could be kept from him! If only it could be broken to him by degrees!

And long they stood outside his door whispering together. And when it was over they whispered together again.

He would feel it more, they were afraid, as time went on. Still, he had taken it better than could have been expected. He would keep his bed, of course!

They separated, crying quietly.

Aunt Juley stayed in her room, prostrated by the blow. Her face, discoloured by tears, was divided into compartments by the little ridges of pouting flesh which had swollen with emotion. It was impossible to conceive of life without Ann, who had lived with her for seventythree years, broken only by the short interregnum of her married life, which seemed now so unreal. At fixed intervals she went to her drawer, and took from beneath the lavender bags a fresh pockethandkerchief. Her warm heart could not bear the thought that Ann was lying there so cold.

Aunt Hester, the silent, the patient, that backwater of the family energy, sat in the drawingroom, where the blinds were drawn; and she, too, had wept at first, but quietly, without visible effect. Her guiding principle, the conservation of energy, did not abandon her in sorrow. She sat, slim, motionless, studying the grate, her hands idle in the lap of her black silk dress. They would want to rouse her into doing something, no doubt. As if there were any good in that! Doing something would not bring back Ann! Why worry her?

Five o'clock brought three of the brothers, Jolyon and James and Swithin; Nicholas was at Yarmouth, and Roger had a bad attack of gout. Mrs. Hayman had been by herself

earlier in the day, and, after seeing Ann, had gone away, leaving a message for Timothywhich was kept from himthat she ought to have been told sooner. In fact, there was a feeling amongst them all that they ought to have been told sooner, as though they had missed something; and James said:

"I knew how it'd be; I told you she wouldn't last through the summer."

Aunt Hester made no reply; it was nearly October, but what was the good of arguing; some people were never satisfied.

She sent up to tell her sister that the brothers were there. Mrs. Small came down at once. She had bathed her face, which was still swollen, and though she looked severely at Swithin's trousers, for they were of light bluehe had come straight from the club, where the news had reached himshe wore a more cheerful expression than usual, the instinct for doing the wrong thing being even now too strong for her.

Presently all five went up to look at the body. Under the pure white sheet a quilted counterpane had been placed, for now, more than ever, Aunt Ann had need of warmth; and, the pillows removed, her spine and head rested flat, with the semblance of their lifelong inflexibility; the coif banding the top of her brow was drawn on either side to the level of the ears, and between it and the sheet her face, almost as white, was turned with closed eyes to the faces of her brothers and sisters. In its extraordinary peace the face was stronger than ever, nearly all bone now under the scarcewrinkled parchment of skinsquare jaw and chin, cheekbones, forehead with hollow temples, chiselled nosethe fortress of an unconquerable spirit that had yielded to death, and in its upward sightlessness seemed trying to regain that spirit, to regain the guardianship it had just laid down.

Swithin took but one look at the face, and left the room; the sight, he said afterwards, made him very queer. He went downstairs shaking the whole house, and, seizing his hat, clambered into his brougham, without giving any directions to the coachman. He was driven home, and all the evening sat in his chair without moving.

He could take nothing for dinner but a partridge, with an imperial pint of champagne.

Old Jolyon stood at the bottom of the bed, his hands folded in front of him. He alone of those in the room remembered the death of his mother, and though he looked at Ann, it was of that he was thinking. Ann was an old woman, but death had come to her at lastdeath came to all! His face did not move, his gaze seemed travelling from very far.

Aunt Hester stood beside him. She did not cry now, tears were exhaustedher nature refused to permit a further escape of force; she twisted her hands, looking not at Ann, but from side to side, seeking some way of escaping the effort of realization.

Of all the brothers and sisters James manifested the most emotion. Tears rolled down the parallel furrows of his thin face; where he should go now to tell his troubles he did not know; Juley was no good, Hester worse than useless! He felt Ann's death more than he had ever thought he should; this would upset him for weeks!

Presently Aunt Hester stole out, and Aunt Juley began moving about, doing 'what was necessary,' so that twice she knocked against something. Old Jolyon, roused from his reverie, that reverie of the long, long past, looked sternly at her, and went away. James alone was left by the bedside; glancing stealthily round, to see that he was not observed, he twisted his long body down, placed a kiss on the dead forehead, then he, too, hastily left the room. Encountering Smither in the hall, he began to ask her about the funeral, and, finding that she knew nothing, complained bitterly that, if they didn't take care, everything would go wrong. She had better send for Mr. Soameshe knew all about that sort of thing; her master was very much upset, he supposedhe would want looking after; as for her mistresses, they were no goodthey had no gumption! They would be ill too, he shouldn't wonder. She had better send for the doctor; it was best to take things in time. He didn't think his sister Ann had had the best opinion; if she'd had Blank she would have been alive now. Smither might send to Park Lane any time she wanted advice. Of course, his carriage was at their service for the funeral. He supposed she hadn't such a thing as a glass of claret and a biscuithe had had no lunch!

The days before the funeral passed quietly. It had long been known, of course, that Aunt Ann had left her little property to Timothy. There was, therefore, no reason for the slightest agitation. Soames, who was sole executor, took charge of all arrangements, and in due course sent out the following invitation to every male member of the family:

To..

Your presence is requested at the funeral of Miss Ann Forsyte, in Highgate Cemetery, at noon of Oct. 1st. Carriages will meet at "The Bower," Bayswater Road, at 10.45. No flowers by request. 'R.S.V.P.'

The morning came, cold, with a high, grey, London sky, and at halfpast ten the first carriage, that of James, drove up. It contained James and his soninlaw Dartie, a fine man, with a square chest, buttoned very tightly into a frock coat, and a sallow, fattish face adorned with dark, wellcurled moustaches, and that incorrigible commencement of whisker which, eluding the strictest attempts at shaving, seems the mark of something deeply ingrained in the personality of the shaver, being especially noticeable in men who speculate.

Soames, in his capacity of executor, received the guests, for Timothy still kept his bed; he would get up after the funeral; and Aunts Juley and Hester would not be coming

down till all was over, when it was understood there would be lunch for anyone who cared to come back. The next to arrive was Roger, still limping from the gout, and encircled by three of his sonsyoung Roger, Eustace, and Thomas. George, the remaining son, arrived almost immediately afterwards in a hansom, and paused in the hall to ask Soames how he found undertaking pay.

They disliked each other.

Then came two HaymansGiles and Jesse perfectly silent, and very well dressed, with special creases down their evening trousers. Then old Jolyon alone. Next, Nicholas, with a healthy colour in his face, and a carefully veiled sprightliness in every movement of his head and body. One of his sons followed him, meek and subdued. Swithin Forsyte, and Bosinney arrived at the same moment,and stoodbowing precedence to each other,but on the door opening they tried to enter together; they renewed their apologies in the hall, and, Swithin, settling his stock, which had become disarranged in the struggle, very slowly mounted the stairs. The other Hayman; two married sons of Nicholas, together with Tweetyman, Spender, and Warry, the husbands of married Forsyte and Hayman daughters. The company was then complete, twentyone in all, not a male member of the family being absent but Timothy and young Jolyon.

Entering the scarlet and green drawingroom, whose apparel made so vivid a setting for their unaccustomed costumes, each tried nervously to find a seat, desirous of hiding the emphatic blackness of his trousers. There seemed a sort of indecency in that blackness and in the colour of their glovesa sort of exaggeration of the feelings; and many cast shocked looks of secret envy at 'the Buccaneer,' who had no gloves, and was wearing grey trousers. A subdued hum of conversation rose, no one speaking of the departed, but each asking after the other, as though thereby casting an indirect libation to this event, which they had come to honour.

And presently James said:

"Well, I think we ought to be starting."

They went downstairs, and, two and two, as they had been told off in strict precedence, mounted the carriages.

The hearse started at a foot's pace; the carriages moved slowly after. In the first went old Jolyon with Nicholas; in the second, the twins, Swithin and James; in the third, Roger and young Roger; Soames, young Nicholas, George, and Bosinney followed in the fourth. Each of the other carriages, eight in all, held three or four of the family; behind them came the doctor's brougham; then, at a decent interval, cabs containing family clerks and servants; and at the very end, one containing nobody at all, but bringing the total cortege up to the number of thirteen.

So long as the procession kept to the highway of the Bayswater Road, it retained the foot'space, but, turning into less important thoroughfares, it soon broke into a trot, and so proceeded, with intervals of walking in the more fashionable streets, until it arrived. In the first carriage old Jolyon and Nicholas were talking of their wills. In the second the twins, after a single attempt, had lapsed into complete silence; both were rather deaf, and the exertion of making themselves heard was too great. Only once James broke this silence:

"I shall have to be looking about for some ground somewhere. What arrangements have you made, Swithin?"

And Swithin, fixing him with a dreadful stare, answered:

"Don't talk to me about such things!"

In the third carriage a disjointed conversation was carried on in the intervals of looking out to see how far they had got, George remarking, "Well, it was really time that the poor old lady went." He didn't believe in people living beyond seventy, Young Nicholas replied mildly that the rule didn't seem to apply to the Forsytes. George said he himself intended to commit suicide at sixty. Young Nicholas, smiling and stroking a long chin, didn't think his father would like that theory; he had made a lot of money since he was sixty. Well, seventy was the outside limit; it was then time, George said, for them to go and leave their money to their children. Soames, hitherto silent, here joined in; he had not forgotten the remark about the 'undertaking,' and, lifting his eyelids almost imperceptibly, said it was all very well for people who never made money to talk. He himself intended to live as long as he could. This was a hit at George, who was notoriously hard up. Bosinney muttered abstractedly "Hear, hear!" and, George yawning, the conversation dropped.

Upon arriving, the coffin was borne into the chapel, and, two by two, the mourners filed in behind it. This guard of men, all attached to the dead by the bond of kinship, was an impressive and singular sight in the great city of London, with its overwhelming diversity of life, its innumerable vocations, pleasures, duties, its terrible hardness, its terrible call to individualism.

The family had gathered to triumph over all this, to give a show of tenacious unity, to illustrate gloriously that law of property underlying the growth of their tree, by which it had thriven and spread, trunk and branches, the sap flowing through all, the full growth reached at the appointed time. The spirit of the old woman lying in her last sleep had called them to this demonstration. It was her final appeal to that unity which had been their strengthit was her final triumph that she had died while the tree was yet whole.

She was spared the watching of the branches jut out beyond the point of balance. She could not look into the hearts of her followers. The same law that had worked in her, bringing her up from a tall, straightbacked slip of a girl to a woman strong and grown, from a woman grown to a woman old, angular, feeble, almost witchlike, with individuality all sharpened and sharpened, as all rounding from the world's contact fell off from herthat same law would work, was working, in the family she had watched like a mother.

She had seen it young, and growing, she had seen it strong and grown, and before her old eyes had time or strength to see any more, she died. She would have tried, and who knows but she might have kept it young and strong, with her old fingers, her trembling kissesa little longer; alas! not even Aunt Ann could fight with Nature.

'Pride comes before a fall!' In accordance with this, the greatest of Nature's ironies, the Forsyte family had gathered for a last proud pageant before they fell. Their faces to right and left, in single lines, were turned for the most part impassively toward the ground, guardians of their thoughts; but here and there, one looking upward, with a line between his brows, searched to see some sight on the chapel walls too much for him, to be listening to something that appalled. And the responses, lowmuttered, in voices through which rose the same tone, the same unseizable family ring, sounded weird, as though murmured in hurried duplication by a single person.

The service in the chapel over, the mourners filed up again to guard the body to the tomb. The vault stood open, and, round it, men in black were waiting.

From that high and sacred field, where thousands of the upper middle class lay in their last sleep, the eyes of the Forsytes travelled down across the flocks of graves. Therespreading to the distance, lay London, with no sun over it, mourning the loss of its daughter, mourning with this family, so dear, the loss of her who was mother and guardian. A hundred thousand spires and houses, blurred in the great grey web of property, lay there like prostrate worshippers before the grave of this, the oldest Forsyte of them all.

A few words, a sprinkle of earth, the thrusting of the coffin home, and Aunt Ann had passed to her last rest.

Round the vault, trustees of that passing, the five brothers stood, with white heads bowed; they would see that Ann was comfortable where she was going. Her little property must stay behind, but otherwise, all that could be should be done.

Then severally, each stood aside, and putting on his hat, turned back to

inspect the new inscription on the marble of the family vault:

Soon perhaps, someone else would be wanting an inscription. It was strange and intolerable, for they had not thought somehow, that Forsytes could die. And one and all they had a longing to get away from this painfulness, this ceremony which had reminded them of things they could not bear to think aboutto get away quickly and go about their business and forget.

It was cold, too; the wind, like some slow, disintegrating force, blowing up the hill over the graves, struck them with its chilly breath; they began to split into groups, and as quickly as possible to fill the waiting carriages.

Swithin said he should go back to lunch at Timothy's, and he offered to take anybody with him in his brougham. It was considered a doubtful privilege to drive with Swithin in his brougham, which was not a large one; nobody accepted, and he went off alone. James and Roger followed immediately after; they also would drop in to lunch. The others gradually melted away, Old Jolyon taking three nephews to fill up his carriage; he had a want of those young faces.

Soames felt in excellent spirits when he arrived home, and confided to Irene at dinner that he had had a good talk with Bosinney, who really seemed a sensible fellow; they had had a capital walk too, which had done his liver goodhe had been short of exercise for a long timeand altogether a very satisfactory day. If only it hadn't been for poor Aunt Ann, he would have taken her to the theatre; as it was, they must make the best of an evening at home.

"The Buccaneer asked after you more than once," he said suddenly. And moved by some inexplicable desire to assert his proprietorship, he rose from his chair and planted a kiss on his wife's shoulder.