

JOHN GALSWORTHY

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# THE FORSYTE SAGA

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## THE MAN OF PROPERTY



JOHN GALSWORTHY

**THE FORSYTE SAGA**

**THE MAN OF PROPERTY**

ENGLISH

CLASSIC LITERATURE

Комментарии и словарь  
*Е. Г. Тигонен*

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО  
**КАРО**  
Санкт-Петербург

УДК 372.8  
ББК 81.2 Англ-93  
Г 60

**Голсуорси Дж.**

Г 60      Сага о Форсайтах. Собственник: Книга для чтения на английском языке. — СПб.: КАРО, 2011. — 608 с.  
ISBN 978-5-9925-0158-2.

Вниманию читающей публики предлагается первая книга из трилогии Нобелевского лауреата Джона Голсуорси (1867–1933) «Сага о Форсайтах» — «Собственник». Жизнь высшего общества Лондона представляет немалый интерес для тех, кто хочет знать, как вести себя, не теряя лица, не выказывая открыто никаких эмоций, не унижая собственного достоинства, соблюдая приличия, при том что за фасадом чинности и благопристойности в большом семействе Форсайтов бушуют общечеловеческие страсти: любовь, предательство, измена, смерть, желание мести, — и где основополагающим чувством является чувство собственности.

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**УДК 372.8**  
**ББК 81.2 Англ-93**

ISBN 978-5-9925-0158-2

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# PREFACE

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*To my wife: I dedicate the Forsyte saga in its entirety, believing it to be of all my works the least unworthy of one without whose encouragement, sympathy and criticism I could never have become even such a writer as I am.*

“The Forsyte Saga” was the title originally destined for that part of it which is called “The Man of Property”; and to adopt it for the collected chronicles of the Forsyte family has indulged the Forsytean tenacity that is in all of us. The word Saga might be objected to on the ground that<sup>1</sup> it connotes the heroic and that there is little heroism in these pages. But it is used with a suitable irony; and, after all, this long tale, though it may deal with folk in frock coats, furbelows, and a gilt-edged period, is not devoid of the essential heat of conflict. Discounting for the gigantic stature and blood-thirstiness of old days, as they have come down to us in fairy-tale and legend, the folk of the old Sagas were Forsytes, assuredly, in their possessive instincts, and as little proof against the inroads of beauty and passion as Swithin, Soames,

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<sup>1</sup> on the ground that — (разл.) на том основании, что

or even young Jolyon. And if heroic figures, in days that never were, seem to startle out from their surroundings in fashion unbecoming to a Forsyte of the Victorian era<sup>1</sup>, we may be sure that tribal instinct was even then the prime force, and that “family” and the sense of home and property counted as they do to this day, for all the recent efforts to “talk them out.”

So many people have written and claimed that their families were the originals of the Forsytes that one has been almost encouraged to believe in the typicality of an imagined species. Manners change and modes evolve, and “Timothy’s on the Bayswater Road” becomes a nest of the unbelievable in all except essentials; we shall not look upon its like again, nor perhaps on such a one as James or old Jolyon. And yet the figures of Insurance Societies and the utterances of Judges reassure us daily that our earthly paradise is still a rich preserve, where the wild raiders, Beauty and Passion, come stealing in, filching security from beneath our noses. As surely as a dog will bark at a brass band, so will the essential Soames in human nature ever rise up uneasily against the dissolution which hovers round the folds of ownership.

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<sup>1</sup> **the Victorian era** — время царствования королевы Виктории (1837–1901)

"Let the dead Past bury its dead" would be a better saying if the Past ever died. The persistence of the Past is one of those tragi-comic blessings which each new age denies, coming cocksure on to the stage to mouth its claim to a perfect novelty.

But no Age is so new as that! Human Nature, under its changing pretensions and clothes, is and ever will be very much of a Forsyte, and might, after all, be a much worse animal.

Looking back on the Victorian era, whose ripeness, decline, and 'fall-of' is in some sort pictured in "The Forsyte Saga," we see now that we have but jumped out of a frying-pan into a fire. It would be difficult to substantiate a claim that the case of England was better in 1913 than it was in 1886, when the Forsytes assembled at old Jolyon's to celebrate the engagement of June to Philip Bosinney. And in 1920, when again the clan gathered to bless the marriage of Fleur with Michael Mont, the state of England is as surely too molten and bankrupt as in the eighties it was too congealed and low-percented. If these chronicles had been a really scientific study of transition one would have dwelt probably on such factors as the invention of bicycle, motor-car, and flying-machine; the arrival of a cheap Press; the decline of country life and increase of the towns;

the birth of the Cinema. Men are, in fact, quite unable to control their own inventions; they at best develop adaptability to the new conditions those inventions create.

But this long tale is no scientific study of a period; it is rather an intimate incarnation of the disturbance that Beauty effects in the lives of men.

The figure of Irene, never, as the reader may possibly have observed, present, except through the senses of other characters, is a concretion of disturbing Beauty impinging on a possessive world.

One has noticed that readers, as they wade on through the salt waters of the Saga, are inclined more and more to pity Soames, and to think that in doing so they are in revolt against the mood of his creator. Far from it!<sup>1</sup> He, too, pities Soames, the tragedy of whose life is the very simple, uncontrollable tragedy of being unlovable, without quite a thick enough skin to be thoroughly unconscious of the fact. Not even Fleur loves Soames as he feels he ought to be loved. But in pitying Soames, readers incline, perhaps, to animus against Irene: After all, they think, he wasn't a bad fellow, it wasn't his fault; she ought to have forgiven him, and so on!

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<sup>1</sup> **Far from it!** — (зδ.) Ничего подобного!

And, taking sides<sup>1</sup>, they lose perception of the simple truth, which underlies the whole story, that where sex attraction is utterly and definitely lacking in one partner to a union, no amount of pity, or reason, or duty, or what not, can overcome a repulsion implicit in Nature. Whether it ought to, or no, is beside the point; because in fact it never does. And where Irene seems hard and cruel, as in the Bois de Boulogne, or the Goupenor Gallery, she is but wisely realistic — knowing that the least concession is the inch which precedes the impossible, the repulsive ell.

A criticism one might pass on the last phase of the Saga is the complaint that Irene and Jolyon those rebels against property — claim spiritual property in their son Jon. But it would be hyper-criticism, as the tale is told. No father and mother could have let the boy marry Fleur without knowledge of the facts; and the facts determine Jon, not the persuasion of his parents. Moreover, Jolyon's persuasion is not on his own account, but on Irene's, and Irene's persuasion becomes a reiterated: "Don't think of me, think of yourself!" That Jon, knowing the facts, can realise his mother's feelings, will hardly with justice be held proof that she is, after all, a Forsyte.

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<sup>1</sup> **taking sides** — (зд.) становясь на чью-либо сторону; поддерживая одного или другого



But though the impingement of Beauty and the claims of Freedom on a possessive world are the main prepossessions of the Forsyte Saga, it cannot be absolved from the charge of embalming the upper-middle class. As the old Egyptians placed around their mummies the necessaries of a future existence, so I have endeavoured to lay beside the figures of Aunts Ann and Juley and Hester, of Timothy and Swithin, of old Jolyon and James, and of their sons, that which shall guarantee them a little life here-after, a little balm in the hurried Gilead of a dissolving "Progress."

If the upper-middle class, with other classes, is destined to "move on" into amorphism, here, pickled in these pages, it lies under glass for strollers in the wide and ill-arranged museum of Letters. Here it rests, preserved in its own juice: *The Sense of Property*. 1922.

# PART I

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## *Chapter I*

### **'AT HOME' AT OLD JOLYON'S**

Those privileged to be present at a family festival of the Forsytes have seen that charming and instructive sight — an upper-middle class family in full plumage<sup>1</sup>. But whosoever of these favoured persons has possessed the gift of psychological analysis (a talent without monetary value and properly ignored by the Forsytes), has witnessed a spectacle, not only delightful in itself, but illustrative of an obscure human problem. In plainer words, he has gleaned from a gathering of this family — no branch of which had a liking for the other, between no three members of whom existed anything worthy of the name of sympathy — evidence of that mysterious concrete tenacity which renders a family so formidable a unit of society, so clear

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<sup>1</sup> **in full plumage** — (зд.) во всей красе

a reproduction of society in miniature. He has been admitted to a vision of the dim roads of social progress, has understood something of patriarchal life, of the swarmings of savage hordes, of the rise and fall of nations. He is like one who, having watched a tree grow from its planting — a paragon of tenacity, insulation, and success, amidst the deaths of a hundred other plants less fibrous, sappy, and persistent — one day will see it flourishing with bland, full foliage, in an almost repugnant prosperity, at the summit of its efflorescence.

On June 15, eighteen eighty-six, about four of the afternoon, the observer who chanced to be present at the house of old Jolyon Forsyte in Stanhope Gate, might have seen the highest efflorescence of the Forsytes.

This was the occasion of an 'at home' to celebrate the engagement of Miss June Forsyte, old Jolyon's granddaughter, to Mr. Philip Bosinney. In the bravery of light gloves, buff waistcoats, feathers and frocks, the family were present, even Aunt Ann, who now but seldom left the corner of her brother Timothy's green drawing-room, where, under the aegis of a plume of dyed pampas grass in a light blue vase, she sat all day reading and knitting, surrounded by the effigies of three generations of Forsytes. Even Aunt Ann was there; her inflexible back, and the dignity of her calm old face personifying the rigid possessiveness of the family idea.

When a Forsyte was engaged, married, or born, the Forsytes were present; when a Forsyte died — but no Forsyte had as yet died; they did not die; death being contrary to their principles, they took precautions against it, the instinctive precautions of highly vitalized persons who resent encroachments on their property.

About the Forsytes mingling that day with the crowd of other guests, there was a more than ordinarily groomed look, an alert, inquisitive assurance, a brilliant respectability, as though they were attired in defiance of something. The habitual sniff on the face of Soames Forsyte had spread through their ranks; they were on their guard.

The subconscious offensiveness of their attitude has constituted old Jolyon's 'home' the psychological moment of the family history, made it the prelude of their drama.

The Forsytes were resentful of something, not individually, but as a family; this resentment expressed itself in an added perfection of raiment, an exuberance of family cordiality, an exaggeration of family importance, and — the sniff. Danger — so indispensable in bringing out the fundamental quality of any society, group, or individual — was what the Forsytes scented; the premonition of danger put a burnish on their armour. For the first time, as a family, they appeared to have an instinct of being in contact, with some strange and unsafe thing.

Over against the piano a man of bulk and stature was wearing two waistcoats on his wide chest, two waistcoats and a ruby pin, instead of the single satin waistcoat and diamond pin of more usual occasions, and his shaven, square, old face, the colour of pale leather, with pale eyes, had its most dignified look, above his satin stock. This was Swithin Forsyte. Close to the window, where he could get more than his fair share of fresh air, the other twin, James — the fat and the lean<sup>1</sup> of it, old Jolyon called these brothers — like the bulky Swithin, over six feet in height, but very lean, as though destined from his birth to strike a balance and maintain an average, brooded over the scene with his permanent stoop; his grey eyes had an air of fixed absorption in some secret worry, broken at intervals by a rapid, shifting scrutiny of surrounding facts; his cheeks, thinned by two parallel folds, and a long, clean-shaven upper lip, were framed within Dundreary whiskers<sup>2</sup>. In his hands he turned and turned a piece of china. Not far off, listening to a lady in brown, his only son Soames, pale and well-shaved, dark-haired, rather bald, had poked his chin up sideways, carrying his nose with that aforesaid appearance of ‘sniff,’ as though despising an egg which he knew he could not digest.

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<sup>1</sup> **the fat and the lean** — «толстый и тонкий»

<sup>2</sup> **Dundreary whiskers** — длинные бакенбарды без бороды

Behind him his cousin, the tall George, son of the fifth Forsyte, Roger, had a Quilpish look<sup>1</sup> on his fleshy face, pondering one of his sardonic jests. Something inherent to the occasion had affected them all.

Seated in a row close to one another were three ladies — Aunts Ann, Hester (the two Forsyte maids), and Juley (short for Julia), who not in first youth had so far forgotten herself as to marry Septimus Small, a man of poor constitution. She had survived him for many years. With her elder and younger sister she lived now in the house of Timothy, her sixth and youngest brother, on the Bayswater Road. Each of these ladies held fans in their hands, and each with some touch of colour, some emphatic feather or brooch, testified to the solemnity of the opportunity.

In the centre of the room, under the chandelier, as became a host<sup>2</sup>, stood the head of the family, old Jolyon himself. Eighty years of age, with his fine, white hair, his dome-like forehead, his little, dark grey eyes, and an immense white moustache, which drooped and spread below the level of his strong jaw, he had a patriarchal look, and in spite

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<sup>1</sup> **Quilp** — злой и коварный карлик, персонаж «Лавки древностей» Ч. Диккенса

<sup>2</sup> **as became a host** — (*разг.*) как и подобало хозяину дома

of lean cheeks and hollows at his temples, seemed master of perennial youth. He held himself extremely upright, and his shrewd, steady eyes had lost none of their clear shining. Thus he gave an impression of superiority to the doubts and dislikes of smaller men. Having had his own way for innumerable years, he had earned a prescriptive right to it. It would never have occurred to old Jolyon that it was necessary to wear a look of doubt or of defiance.

Between him and the four other brothers who were present, James, Swithin, Nicholas, and Roger, there was much difference, much similarity. In turn, each of these four brothers was very different from the other, yet they, too, were alike.

Through the varying features and expression of those five faces could be marked a certain steadfastness of chin, underlying surface distinctions, marking a racial stamp, too prehistoric to trace, too remote and permanent to discuss — the very hallmark and guarantee of the family fortunes.

Among the younger generation, in the tall, bull-like George, in pallid strenuous Archibald, in young Nicholas with his sweet and tentative obstinacy, in the grave and foppishly determined Eustace, there was this same stamp — less meaningful perhaps, but unmistakable — a sign of something ineradicable in the family soul. At one time or another during the afternoon, all these faces,

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**THE FORSYTE SAGA**

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**САГА О ФОРСАЙТАХ**

**Собственник**

*Комментарии и словарь*

*Е. Г. Тигонен*

Ответственный редактор *О. П. Панайотти*

Корректор *Е. Г. Тигонен*

Технический редактор *А. Б. Иванов*

Иллюстрация на обложке *О. В. Маркиной*

Издательство «КАРО», ЛР № 065644

195027, Санкт-Петербург, Свердловская наб., д. 60, (812) 570-54-97

**WWW.KARO.SPB.RU**

Гигиенический сертификат

№ 78.01.07.953.П.004019.03.07 от 22.03.2007

Подписано в печать 23.08.2011. Формат 70 x 100 <sup>1/32</sup>. Бумага газетная.

Печать офсетная. Усл. печ. л. 25,8. Тираж 1500 экз. Заказ № 08.11

Отпечатано в типографии «КАРО»