PREFACE

John Galsworthy established his reputation in the literary history of England as a significant figure both in fiction and in drama. However, full length studies of his work to date have been few and far between. The present study aims at close study of the plays of Galsworthy as tools for social commentary.

Galsworthy believed that “A drama must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day.”* Almost all his plays are concerned with the issues of contemporary England. They are the dramas of ideas, of problems, and of the questions of practical life. They have their inception in observation of human nature in contact with life. They are not sermons deliberately written. Their purpose is to study and analyse social problems. The picture they present is that of conflict between opposing forces, ideas, feelings, and institutions.

In the period ranging in between 1906 to 1929, Galsworthy produced 21 full length plays and seven playlets. The Silver Box exposes the great social evil that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

Joy describes the development of an adolescent girl into a lover and woman through emotional conflict. Strife deals with the conflict of labour and capital. Justice discusses the problems of the criminals condemned to solitary confinement. The Little Dream is about the quest of a young girl’s spirit for experience and knowledge. In The Eldest Son we find the deep rooted class conscious prejudices of an old English baronet family whose eldest son wants to marry the housemaid. The Pigeon is about the reclaiming of social outcasts and the failures of the so-called reformatories and philanthropists. The problem of unhappy marriage is the theme of The Fugitive.

The Mob is a study of the eternal warfare waged between fidelity to principle and worldly compromise. A Bit O’ Love portrays an idealist who believes in passion and forgiveness. The nature of industrial class relationship is discussed in The Foundations. In The Skin Game Galsworthy brings out the clash of interests between the English nobility and the industrial manufacturers. A Family Man is a drama of unimaginative domestic tyranny. Loyalties is a play against anti-Semitism. It extends sympathy to a vulgar young Jew from whom a gentleman steals money to buy off his former mistress.

Windows is based on the theme of class barriers. The Forest brings to light the unscrupulous financial speculations in the commercial world of modern times. Old English studies the vanishing type of ruggedly individualist man of affairs. The Show is a drama of sensation.
In *Escape* we read of sympathy and humanity in a convict. *Exiled* is about the exile of the English landed gentry to other lands producing industrial magnates. *The Roof* is a realistic dramatization of contemporary life. The seven playlets deal with social problems of youth, love, women, blind commercialism, class prejudices and other favourite subjects of Galsworthy.

The thesis focuses on the following plays:

1. *The Silver Box* (1906)
2. *Justice* (1910)
3. *Escape* (1926)
4. *Strife* (1909)
5. *Loyalties* (1922)
7. *The Skin Game* (1920)
8. *The Fugitive* (1913)
9. *A Family Man* (1921)

All references are to the following edition:


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