

After the Play

IT has been the fashion for some years to speak of Mr. Galsworthy as impartial, to note the painful suspense in which his own emotions have been held. That he has felt keenly no one could doubt. His books and plays are the outcome of susceptibility. But that susceptibility Mr. Galsworthy has seemed to constrain. A forced fairness, as of one powerless to accept and yet equally powerless to reject, has qualified his account of the England into which he was born.

In "Justice," the drama that has waited since 1910 for its American production, Mr. Galsworthy has at last found a theme in which his own peculiar susceptibilities have been able in all fairness to be given their ultimate scope. In most of his other creations he was dealing with an impalpable force, with a cruelty or obtuseness or pharisaism in the English people that were matters of discernment, matters that required an assent in his listeners and that could hardly be put to the proof. Even in "Strife," where his own sympathies were evident, he could not pretend that the ruling class had not principles by which it morally subsists. Such principles might revolt Mr. Galsworthy. To himself they would be impossible. But even more would it be impossible to satisfy his ache for fairness by indulging in a single assumption that the ruling class could think unfair. But in "Justice," a tragedy, the force against which Mr. Galsworthy proceeded was no longer impalpable. It was all the philistinism of the English that he so hates summed up and panoplied in the sanctioned action of the law. Anglo-Saxon philistinism is not easy to impale. Outside social institutions it can twist and argue "common sense" and insist on good intentions equal to your own. But Mr. Galsworthy found in "Justice" a condensation of the detested island attributes. The things in the Anglo-Saxon that are an outrage to him he found here quite unmitigated and unquestioned and justified. This was not like the case of capitalism, where the intentions of the orthodox might conceivably be misconstrued. In "Justice" the orthodox became overt. It was not necessary to go behind their record. To exhibit in the record everything which violated his own contrary presumptions about life was possible without imputing one base motive or asking for one admission that the philistine might choose to dispute.

One's friends in the legal profession are not inclined to be impressed by "Justice." Its sincerity they do not deny, or its sensitiveness. But even admitting that its incident is reported with complete veracity, they regard it as "uplift" propaganda, a single instance of legal misadventure interpreted with unreasonable and disproportionate seriousness, a bit of pleading that in the end is shallow, sentimental and "special."

If the issue of the junior clerk that Mr. Galsworthy presents were in any way a false or romanticized issue, the righteousness which Falder collides with could honorably absolve itself, and all the strength of Mr. Galsworthy as recusant would vanish. But the more one thinks about "Justice," the less shallow the case against the philistines seems to be. It is not as if Falder's forgery were in any way palliated. Mr. Galsworthy selects for the victim of philistinism just the kind of creature that philistinism is fain to denounce. There is no glamour about this junior clerk. His own advocate does not pretend that he has innocence. On the basis of an eye for an eye, he merits the worst. He is not in the slightest sense a hero. The

one affair that reveals his humanity is an instinctive, unhappy, irregular affair of love. But just because he is guilty of a sin against property, just because his feebleness forces him into the hands of society, the onus of that guilt and feebleness is all the more a test of the society that presumes to judge.

For it is not merely the law that Mr. Galsworthy portrays in "Justice." It is public opinion. The tribal forces behind the conventions of property are the most obvious, but no less involved are the forces that support the conventions of marriage. Falder stole "for her," and it is the conspiracy of two powerful conventions that brings him guilty to the bar. And when one says that these powerful conventions are the philistines', one means that they are one's own. It is we, after all, who have this wretched creature to deal with, this wretched tangle of fair emotions and false situations to unravel. It is we who ask the junior clerk to be junior, to decide to be equable about injustice to her whom he loves, to keep from functioning if it is too expensive for him to function, to take his medicine if he gets caught, and not to wince if the medicine is a poison that corrodes his veins.

"I'm a family man—I don't want to hear anything unpleasant. Excuse me—I'm very busy." That is the amiable Mr. Cokeson's reaction when the results of the tribal code are about to come home to roost. It is usually our own reaction when an artist asks us to believe that our general accepted morality can possibly be out of joint. To face actual suffering—that is one thing. Most of us think we can stand it. But to question the tribal code—that is different. Then we remember we are family men. "There is enough of horror and grimness and sordid squalor in real life," says an American leader, "with which an active man has to grapple; and when I turn to the world of literature—of books considered as books, and not as instruments of my profession—I do not care to study suffering, unless for some sufficient purpose." Precisely. Most of us are like that, or like Cokeson. We don't want to hear anything unpleasant if it upsets the morality by which we live.

But the beauty of "Justice" is that it does seek to upset our morality, to show us what comes from being good citizens who set the laws in motion, good judges who administer it, good prison officials who inflict its penalties, good family men who hold our noses when the stench begins.

Whatever society ordains, whether in peace or in war, men come soon to assume is as natural as the air of the room in which they breathe. It is only the recusant, the man unregulated, who can honestly say whether the air is actually foul. In "Justice" Mr. Galsworthy has quietly, patiently, moderately insisted that for him, with his kind of spirit, the air of Anglo-Saxon "justice" is too bitter and poisonous to breathe.

As it is acted at the Candler Theater in New York, "Justice" goes home. An article could be written about the extraordinarily imaginative and sensitive performance by John Barrymore as Falder, and there is much to say about O. P. Heggie's Cokeson, a fine example of the actor's art. But the supreme thing is the use Mr. Galsworthy makes of a minor incident to show how a decent conscience can be lacerated by the things good men do. It is not, as it may seem, an appeal *ad misericordiam*. It is not under-dog sentimentality. It is, at least for the present writer, a firm and clear estimate of the consequences that arise when the man who is handicapped is broken on the tribal wheel.

F. H.

Books and Things

BY dint of effort I can almost recover the days when I thought I knew what an educated man ought to be. Somewhere in Huxley I had just come across the ideal definition. It was a stimulant and an excitement and an inspiration. Under its spell I made a resolution which is still a source of legitimate pride. In spite of difficulties which would have staggered or shattered a will less violently awake, in spite of the four years I had just spent at a good school, in spite of the four years I was about to enjoy at a good college, I resolved to get an education. This new and revolutionary ambition haunted me like a passion. For days and nights I thought of nothing else. For seven days, perhaps, and part of one night. In the second week, say, comfortable habits and new interests began to make life uncomfortable for this alien ambition. Before long they killed it. At first its grave was marked by a stone, suitably and yet decently inscribed. This ambition died without issue. During the years that came next I no more thought of becoming an educated man than I thought of becoming a satrap, the founder of a new and improved religion, the conqueror of Siniolchum, or the discoverer of a pole. With torpid and unaffected cynicism I found my place among those of whom Huxley has said: "They work to pass and not to know, and nature takes her revenge: they do pass and they don't know."

Nowadays, no doubt because so much of my time is passed among men who belong to the Phi Beta Kappa, I realize that I shall never meet an educated man. Definitions and descriptions of him move and charm and thrill me, as I am thrilled when reading of the swift runner who could beat the arrow to their mark. But of course I know an uneducated man when I see one. The uneducated man is one, for example, who can read "A Modern School," Mr. Abraham Flexner's pamphlet, Number 3 in the occasional papers published by the General Education Board, and carry away the notion that the kind of school Mr. Flexner believes in is a soft and effortless place. Mr. Flexner says: "Most of what a child should do coincides with its own preference, or with a preference very readily elicited. But preference or lack of preference on the child's part is not the sole or final consideration." And again: "Compulsion will be employed, however, to accomplish anything that needs to be accomplished by compulsion, provided it can be accomplished by compulsion." To say nothing of these passages, there is also throughout the pamphlet such a flavor of exact, decisive mind that a liking for softness is inconceivable in its author. One must be uneducated indeed to mistake the assertion that much effort is wasted in our schools for an assertion that no effort is needed.

Mr. Flexner, who quotes "figures to show how egregiously we fail to teach Latin," says several things from which I dissent utterly. "Neither Latin nor Greek," he writes, "would be continued in the curriculum of the Modern School—not, of course, because their literatures are less wonderful than they are reputed to be, but because their present position in the curriculum rests upon tradition and assumption. A positive case can be made out for neither." On the contrary, nothing is easier than to make out a positive case for Latin. To my study of Latin I owe my conception of my relation to the world. For seven years I lived with the Latin language, just as I have lived

with life for forty-seven, without acquiring a knowledge of either life or Latin. The study of Latin was valuable precisely because, being an education in failure, it was a preparation for life, in which a certain percentage of the pupils pass and an insignificant percentage take honors. To spend hours upon hours in misdirected effort, to make less effort than is needed to gain a certain end, to have no idea what the end is that we should like to gain—this is a lot common to students of Latin and to the children of men. To remember one's experience with Latin is to hold the key to most experience.

In a note Mr. Flexner says: "I should perhaps deal with yet another argument—viz., that Latin aids in securing a vigorous or graceful use of the mother tongue. Like the arguments previously considered, this is unsubstantiated opinion; no evidence has ever been presented in proof." Here too I dissent, though not from what Mr. Flexner explicitly says. In any generation the men who use their mother tongue with grace or vigor are few, and it is impossible, in the case of any one of them, to prove that his mastery of English would have been greater if he had known Latin or less if he had not. But one can perceive, even when one's own acquaintance with Latin is of the slightest, that traits which give one pleasure in the verse of Milton and of Tennyson, in the prose of Walter Pater and Max Beerbohm, are there because each of these authors has known Latin and loved it. Each of them might have written as well if he had known no Latin: that is and must remain uncertain. What is certain is that each would have written differently. Mr. Flexner strikes me as denying this by implication, as underestimating, when he surveys the many English writers who have known Latin well, the pleasure given to us by the few whose English has been colored by this knowledge.

Rumor says that somewhere in England, at the Perse School, I believe, quite ordinary boys do learn to read Latin with ease. Before Latin is excluded from the Modern School I should like to have this rumor investigated. If the methods employed in the Perse School are successful, and can be successfully copied, why not have certain pupils in the Modern School, the few who have shown a keen interest in letters, exposed at one time or another to Latin? To know Latin well must be great fun. To learn a little is to heighten one's interest in English words as a medium of expression. Translation from Latin into English must sometimes be an amusing game:

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis.
soles occidere et redire possunt:
nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love:
Old men's sayings are for old men wise enough:
Give them a farthing for the price of the stuff.
Suns may set and suns upon earth arise:
As for us, when for us the brief light dies,
There is only night, and an everlasting sleeping.

Had I been Mr. Arthur Symonds's parents, and had I foreseen his ability to turn Catullus into such English, I should never have sent him to a Latinless school. Neither, by the way, would Mr. Flexner.

P. L.