

**JOHN GALSWORTHY:
AN ERRONEOUS RECORDER OF
AMERICAN SPEECH PATTERNS**

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JOHN GALSWORTHY: AN ERRONEOUS RECORDER OF
AMERICAN SPEECH PATTERNS

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Carolyn Glenn Karhu

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ABSTRACT

John Galsworthy, British novelist, short story writer, playwright, and essayist during the early years of the present century, is best remembered for his commentary on upper middle class English life in the years between 1886 and 1921. It is paradoxical, however, that Galsworthy was an extremely inaccurate observer of the speech of characters save those of his own generation and social station.

In the handling of dialect writing, Galsworthy often fell pitifully short of both accuracy and artistry in recording the speech of characters outside his own social environment; but it is obvious from the reading of his novels that Galsworthy considered himself fully capable of using dialect accurately, for he often went out of his way to bring dialect-speaking characters into his stories and novels. Once having got them there, however, he used them to record speech that might have been little more than half intelligible to one of the characters' own compatriots.

That Galsworthy failed in various ways and at many times in his use of colloquial speech is a matter of record in his own writings. This essay is an examination of Galsworthy's use of what he supposed to be American English as it is spoken by characters in his novels and short stories and of Galsworthy's comments on American speech in his letters and notebooks as recorded in H.V. Marrot's The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy.

Galsworthy knew well the life of the well-to-do upper middle class Englishman, and his characters drawn from that class have the

verisimilitude necessary to make them believable. It was when he tried to give life to persons from a world with which he was not familiar that his artistry failed, and his failure with American characters lay almost completely in his inability to note and to record American patterns of speech with the necessary accuracy. The actions of Galsworthy's Americans are probable enough, but much of their speech is highly unlikely.

There is no reason why Galsworthy should have been ignorant of American English other than that he failed to hear American speech perceptively. Between 1912 and 1931 he made five trips to this country, spending a total of something over nineteen months in the United States. His failure with American English was of a piece, then, with his general failure to record accurately that with which he had only a superficial acquaintance: he was not sufficiently acute in his perception to grasp the essential qualities of American speech from brief exposure to it. The quality of his writing is unfortunately marred by his failure in accurate linguistic transcription.

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Master of Arts

by

Carolyn Glenn Karhu

August 1969

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Carolyn Glenn Karhu entitled "John Galsworthy: An Erroneous Recorder of American Speech Patterns." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Edward E. Irwin

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Lewis C. Talham

Second Committee Member

Charles C. Leet

Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

Wayne E. Stamp

Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

LINGUIST IN EARMUFFS

John Galsworthy, British novelist, short story writer, playwright, and essayist during the early years of the present century, is best remembered for his epic Forsyte Saga, a commentary on upper middle class English life in the years between 1886 and 1921. It is, indeed, for this type of social explication that Galsworthy is most justly famous; for in The Forsyte Saga and his other novels of social commentary which followed it, Galsworthy painted a sweeping panorama of English life. It is paradoxical, however, that Galsworthy, generally conceded to be an accurate observer of the mores of society, was an extremely, sometimes fantastically, inaccurate observer of the speech of characters save those of his own generation and social station.

In the handling of dialect writing, Galsworthy often, almost invariably, fell pitifully short of both accuracy and artistry in recording the speech of characters outside his own social environment; but it is obvious from the reading of his novels that Galsworthy considered himself fully capable of using dialect accurately, for he often went far out of his way to bring dialect-speaking characters into his stories and novels. Once having got them there, however, he used them to record speech that would have been, in all probability, little more than half intelligible to one of the characters' own compatriots. One rather glaring example of Galsworthy's misuse of a dialect he had gone to great pains to introduce into his writing is found in The Country House. In this instance Galsworthy introduces an Irishman--elderly, drunk, a

one-time actor--for no purpose except to deliver a painfully long Jeremiad and, one supposes, to exhibit the author's facility with the use of dialect. The drunken old fellow says this:

Did you ever go to the dentist, mister? . . .
 I went to a dentist once, who professed to stop
 teeth without giving pain; but did they stay in,
 those stoppings? No, me bhoy; they came out before
 you could say Jack Robinson. Now I shimplly ask you,
 d'you call that dentistry? . . . Ut's the same all
 over this pharisaical counthry. Talk of high
 morality and Anglo-Shaxon civilisation! The world was
 never at such low ebb! Phwhat's all this morality?
 Ut stinks of the shop. Look at the condition of Art in
 this counthry! look at the fools you see upon th'
 stage! look at the pictures and books that sell! I
 know what I'm talking about. . . . Phwhat's the secret
 of ut all? Shop, me bhoy! Ut don't pay to go below a
 certain depth! . . . Sir, there are no extremes in this
 fog-smitten land. Do ye think blanks loike me ought to
 exist? Whoy don't they kill us off? . . . Because they
 object to the extreme course. . . . They blink at
 truth in this middle-class counthry. . . . But don't
 tell me that'sh civilisation! . . . And what'sh the
 result? . . . Oi'm dhrunk every night. . . . If ye've
 anything left worth the keeping shober for, keep shober
 by all means; if not, the sooner ye're dhrunk the
 better. . .¹

Now, in order to carry forward the argument of The Country House, it was indeed necessary that such sentiments be voiced, either by one of the characters in the book or in explication by the author. But this particular dialect-speaker was not necessary. The reader, in fact, discovers to his relief that the next time the hero goes to find the Irishman, the old actor has passed to his undoubtedly sodden reward. Apparently, Galsworthy introduced that particular character secure in the belief that he was fully capable of making the Irishman's speech true to life. The author, obviously, did not notice that at the beginning of his

¹ John Galsworthy, The Country House, Devon Edition, The Novels, Tales, and Plays of John Galsworthy (New York, 1926), VII, pp. 32-34.

harangue the old man said "phwhat's" and at the end "what'sh" and at the beginning "I" but at the end "Oi," or that, while the old actor could utter such multisyllabic words as "pharisaical" and "civilisation" with perfect clarity, he was unable to pronounce "sober" and "Saxon." It has been suggested by Dr. Thomas Pyles, now of Northwestern University, that when the old man said "phwhat's" his Irishness was uppermost and when he said "what'sh" his drunkenness was uppermost. At any rate, Galsworthy's accurate use of dialect was never uppermost. It is, moreover, a matter of question just what pronunciation Galsworthy intended to indicate by such spellings as "bhoy" and "dhrunk."

That Galsworthy considered himself an accurate observer of language is evident in other ways. Throughout his writings he makes particular note of current slang, having Soames Forsyte to say, for instance, in In Chancery, "Of all those radiant firms which emblazon with their windows the West End of London, Gaves and Cortegal were considered by Soames the most 'attractive'--word just coming into fashion."² Later, in To Let, he has Holly Forsyte Dartie say, "His laugh . . . was very attractive, though that word, she had heard, was now quite old-fashioned."³ Of Winifred Dartie, a fashionable London matron, Galsworthy says, " . . . it was breath of life to her to keep up with the phrases of the day."⁴ And so it seems to have been with the author himself; he was usually able to do so with the phrases that gained

²John Galsworthy, In Chancery in The Forsyte Saga (New York, 1933), p. 474. The Forsyte Saga includes three novels--The Man of Property, In Chancery, and To Let--and two short stories, "Indian Summer of a Forsyte" and "Awakening." Future references will be to works in this volume by page numbers.

³John Galsworthy, To Let in The Forsyte Saga (New York, 1933), p. 716.

⁴To Let, p. 790.

admittance to the usage of those of his own social world, but he was patently unable to keep up with language used outside that world.

Galsworthy's interest in matters linguistic is further pointed up in a letter written to H.V. Marrot on November 6, 1922, of a manuscript written by Galsworthy in 1898 or 1899. Of it, the author says: "I'm chiefly struck by the decency of the handwriting and the use of the expression 'old-time' as an adjective--probably before the Americans coined it."⁵

Mr. Galsworthy's pretension to linguistic originality was in error: he did not antedate anyone in using the phrase, and this particular expression may not have been coined by "the Americans." The Oxford English Dictionary does not label the adjectival use of "old-time" as being American in origin, and it gives 1888 as the date for its first quotation so using the phrase. The Dictionary of American Usage lists an expression using this phrase as an adjective occurring in 1865. Probably Galsworthy had confused "old-time" with the Southern "old-timey," an expression he never used at all. He did, however, begin a story called "That Old-Time Place" after driving through what he designated as "the old-time places and cemeteries" in New Orleans during his first American tour in 1912.⁶

It is interesting, then, to see that Galsworthy probably did antedate an American usage of considerable fame. In Saint's Progress, written in 1917-18, Galsworthy has Edward Pierson, an English clergyman, say of his daughter, "Poor little Nollie! . . . Every man a kind of wolf

⁵Henry Vincent Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy (London, 1935), p. 8.

⁶Marrot, p. 337.

waiting to pounce on her!"⁷ The use of "wolf" to mark a man as dangerous to women did not come into use in America, according to The Dictionary of American Slang, until the 1930's. The British Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional Usage, edited by Eric Partridge, records the first use of "wolf" with this meaning in 1945, Partridge says, "as one of the results of the American occupation of London." The Dictionary of American Slang notes that the word "wolf" as meaning an aggressive male had in 1917, the year in which Galsworthy wrote Saint's Progress, the very specialized meaning in America of denoting a predatory male homosexual. What a pity Galsworthy could not have lived to know that he had beaten "the Americans" to a coinage!

That Galsworthy failed in various ways and at many times in his use of colloquial speech is a matter of record in his own writings. It will be the purpose of this essay to examine Galsworthy's use of what he supposed to be American English as it is spoken by characters in his novels and short stories. Notice will also be taken of his comments on American speech as presented in his fiction and of his own comments in his letters and notebooks, recorded in H.V. Marrot's The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy. It is not, however, the purpose of this essay to condemn; its purpose is simply to point out that in attempting to reproduce the speech of Americans, Galsworthy really set down linguistic patterns never heard in America, or probably anywhere else.

⁷ John Galsworthy, Saint's Progress, Devon Edition (New York, 1926), XII, p. 304.

CHAPTER II

THE BLINDFOLDED OBSERVER

This man who was to become one of the major commentators on English society was born and bred under circumstances far different from those popularly supposed to be conducive to artistic development. The fourth John Galsworthy was born on August 14, 1867, first son of John Galsworthy, Esq., and his wife Blanche. The senior Galsworthy, a solicitor, is described by Marrot as having long since been a "warm" (i.e., wealthy) man.¹ Galsworthy grew to maturity, then, in a family of upper middle class British society, a family just about one cut below the aristocracy. Marrot describes Galsworthy's boyhood environment as "healthy, rational, and comfortable, verging on luxury, tempered by common sense."² Against this background young Galsworthy led the normal life of a privileged English boy; his younger sister, Mabel (later Mrs. Reynolds), recorded the following remembrance of her brother as a youth:

. . . the pictures stored in my feeble memory of Johnnie's boyhood--even of his later boyhood--are woefully few and vague . . . The general impression left is that of a quite normal, not at all unusual type of boy. . . . He read voraciously books of history and adventure and made himself short-sighted by doing this generally face downward on the floor.³

There is, indeed, nothing in the account of the early life of John Galsworthy that would set him apart from his fellows. Probably the most

¹Marrot, p. 28.

²Marrot, p. 34.

³Marrot, pp. 32-33.

pertinent aspect of his boyhood in terms of this study is that there is no record of his having had contacts--or any apparent interest in making them--with anyone outside his own milieu, although there was present, at least, daily exposure to his family's servants. People of any class save his own seem to have been regarded as in a sort of limbo, if at all, by this young Britisher.

Following the general pattern of boys of his social class, young Galsworthy entered Harrow at the age of fourteen for the summer term of 1881. By the second term of 1882 the adolescent Galsworthy was fairly established at the school, and his Housemaster's report to John Galsworthy, Sr., made at about that time reads:

Your elder boy gives me great satisfaction. His tone, character, temper, and manners are all thoroughly good; and if only he was not so weak in composition he might really distinguish himself at Harrow.⁴

Galsworthy's public school career was, indeed, distinguished more for success in athletics than for scholarship. He won school acclaim in football and track events, and for a while he captained the school football eleven. He was also appointed Head of the House in the third term of 1884 and apparently fulfilled the duties of his office competently. Of his scholarship Marrot says, "He was adequate and sound, but of that brilliance to which falls prizes and distinctions he had none . . ."⁵

⁴Marrot, p. 37.

⁵Marrot, p. 41.

Again, the significant fact is his apparent lack of any observation of persons, except the boys from backgrounds similar to his own with whom he lived in daily contact. In his letters of this period there is nothing to indicate any acute perceptiveness of the speech and manners of those outside his own circle; there is, in fact, no indication in young Galsworthy's letters from Harrow that there existed for him any world besides that of school and home. This fact is not, of course, at all abnormal for the average boy. Galsworthy's failure to observe those about him except those of his own social order is noteworthy only in that it indicates the lack of awareness that was later to hamper his realistic portrayal of people with whose prototypes he had not lived long and intimately.

In the autumn of 1886 Galsworthy entered New College, Oxford, where his life fell into pleasant lines with no more time devoted to scholarship than was necessary to ensure continued parental approval. But here he was a bit changed in his attitude toward the rest of the world, or so it would seem. He had somehow become aware that there did exist a world other than his own; and George Montagu Harris, a fellow-undergraduate, recorded this reminiscence of the Oxford Galsworthy:

The only characteristic which he displayed during our life in London together which differentiated him from our "set" was his fondness for wandering about at night in the poorer districts, listening to the conversations of the people, sometimes visiting doss-houses. I suppose he must even then have been gathering material for his knowledge of mankind, but he gave no hint of how he was going to use it.⁶

Even when sampling the life of other classes, however, Galsworthy was the observer, the spectator at the show of humanity. There is no evidence that he took any part in the life of "the poorer districts,"

⁶Marrot, p. 65.

and there is no notation in his diaries or letters of any emotional response to the inhabitants thereof. His attitude seems to have been that of Winifred Dartie, one of his characters, who says in The Man of Property, "I should like to see the common people making love . . . it's such fun!"⁷ Later, in To Let, the fashionable Mrs. Dartie reiterates this position saying, "Well, the people are always amusing, I shall go into the Park and watch them."⁸ Her attitude, and that of her creator, seems to have been that "the people" were allowed to roam at large to provide an amusing spectacle for their betters. Since there is no record of Galsworthy's having come to know well, or, indeed, of his having come to know at all, any single person in the course of his nocturnal wanderings, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he actually regarded these people more as convenient domestic animals on show before him than as representatives of a life other than his own.

At Oxford, Galsworthy studied law, in which his interest was merely superficial, stimulated only by paternal insistence. He apparently impressed none of his fellows as being marked for success in letters or as having any particular interest in anything except as a somewhat cynical observer. He took his degree in 1889, returning afterward to his parents' home in London and taking up the life of the average young man-about-town.

During the next several years nothing of particular note occurred in Galsworthy's life. He traveled in the colonies and on the

⁷ John Galsworthy, The Man of Property in The Forsyte Saga (New York, 1933), p. 187.

⁸To Let, p. 868.

continent and carried on some slight legal activities. It was in the course of his travels that he met Joseph Conrad, first mate on the Torrens on which Galsworthy was traveling from Adelaide to Cape Town in March, 1892. The friendship between the two writers endured for the rest of Galsworthy's life.⁹

Young John Galsworthy was a fairly typical product of Victorian England. The emphasis in his life was on "form," on playing the game by the rules. He had typical Victorian reticence, and his virtues were those of the period. Until 1895 there was nothing of the flaunting of convention and the interest in humanitarianism that was, to the limited degree permissible within the rules, to mark his later life and writing.

In 1895, however, Galsworthy broke with the Victorian code when he fell in love with Ada Cooper Galsworthy, the wife of his cousin Arthur Galsworthy. The pair soon became lovers and continued their affair in a clandestine relationship for nine years thereafter. Galsworthy's love affair was typically played within the rules, as much as such a relationship possibly could be. The first consideration of the lovers was not their own happiness but that of the elder John Galsworthy, then in his very declining years. It was because of Galsworthy's respect for his ultra-Victorian sire that the affair with his cousin-in-law was secret until the death of the old gentleman in December, 1904, made it possible for the pair to bring their relationship into the open, with the result that Ada's husband could sue for divorce on the most obvious of grounds. The couple were married as soon as possible and at once assumed a life of model propriety.¹⁰

⁹Marrot, pp. 68-89.

¹⁰Marrot, pp. 100-103.

Incidentally, Galsworthy's love affair with the wife of his cousin provided the basis for one of the major recurrent themes in his writing. Scarcely one of his novels is without some attack on the divorce laws of his country and on the attitude of the Anglican Church and society toward divorce and toward free love. In playing so heavily on this theme, one feels that Galsworthy set out to do one thing and actually did something entirely different: he made the participants in his fictional love affairs suffer such mental and physical torment (He frequently killed the women, either in childbirth or through a "decline.") that the reader was apt to feel the game not worth the candle. His first novel of major importance, The Man of Property, so nearly paralleled his own love affair that his sister Lily did not want him to publish it, at least not for several years.¹¹

Galsworthy's love affair was in more respects than one the turning point of his life. In the first place, if Marrot's account of Galsworthy's life is to be accepted--and it is the authorized biography--Galsworthy had never before done anything more indiscreet than to return to his rooms after hours as an Oxford undergraduate. An illicit love affair was the more torturing to him, then, because it necessitated the breaking of the rules by which he had consistently lived until that time. He was then twenty-seven years old, an age at which character and habits are generally pretty firmly set. All his life he had been more the observer of life, even in his London forays among the poor, than a participant in it; but he was now plunged into life as an active protagonist. His fear of discovery by his father must have heightened the turmoil of his spirit. For the first time, he was obliged to feel as well as to observe.

¹¹Marrot, pp. 182-183.

In the second place, it was, as Galsworthy himself phrased it, "one who was not then my wife"¹² who first suggested for him a literary career. This first suggestion of authorship as an alternative to the bar as a life's work was, indeed, so casual that it would seem that he stumbled into his profession by the merest chance. When in Easter Week, 1895, Galsworthy was seeing her off at the Gare du Nord in Paris, his cousin-in-law (and mistress) said, "Why don't you write? You'd be just the person."¹³ One can hardly suppress the thought that it would have been a great joke on Galsworthy if she had only meant a letter; but apparently, in context, the remark had the meaning that Galsworthy put upon it, for in his last piece of writing--the address prepared, but never delivered owing to his failing health, for his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 1932--he cited that suggestion as the start of his career in letters.¹⁴ He had previously so designated it in The Triad in 1924.¹⁵

Arriving at his choice of profession relatively late in life as he did, and that almost by chance, Galsworthy, who said he first wrote only "to please her of whom he was fond,"¹⁶ suffered from a nearly irremediable handicap, one which was to mar the effectiveness of his craft. He had not trained himself to be a really perceptive observer of any except those close to his own experience, and this lack of observation was destined to make less believable those characters he sought to portray who were not of his own social level.

¹²Marrot, p. 135.

¹³Marrot, p. 101.

¹⁴Marrot, p. 131.

¹⁵Marrot, p. 135.

¹⁶Marrot, p. 135.

CHAPTER III

TOURIST ON A LEASH

Galsworthy wrote to an American correspondent on July 19, 1927, "The author" begins with an incident leading to other incidents, and with a character leading to other characters. Having these . . . he invests them with as much life as their variety, as his own temperament . . . and as his knowledge of humanity at large permits."¹ This statement is, of course, nothing more than the credo of the realistic school of writing. The telling part of it lies in Galsworthy's reference to an author's "knowledge of humanity at large." It must be admitted, however regretfully, that Galsworthy's knowledge of humanity at large was relatively slight.

Galsworthy knew well the life of the well-to-do upper middle class Englishman; and his characters drawn from that class, those in the Forsyte novels and others like them, have the verisimilitude necessary to make them believable. Dealing with such persons, he was a literary artist at once readable and meaningful; it was when he tried to give life to persons from a world with which he was not familiar that his artistry failed. In the three novels and two short stories comprising the first trilogy of the history of the Forsytes, The Forsyte Saga, there is only one major character not of Galsworthy's own milieu, the quasi-Bohemian architect Philip Bosinney. It is with this one character that Galsworthy had the greatest artistic difficulty. In the course of a lengthy wrangle by mail with Edward Garnett over the final disposition

¹Marrot, p. 602.

of the architect, Galsworthy wrote on June 2, 1905, "I have failed with Bosinney and must continue to fail with him . . ."² In his later novels, however, for purposes of social commentary, Galsworthy repeatedly introduces characters outside his ken, and with not one of them does he achieve the artistic success which blessed his efforts with characters whose prototypes were well known to him.

It was, perhaps, praiseworthy that Galsworthy should even attempt the portrayal of characters of whom he knew relatively little. But the habits and attitudes of half a lifetime made his efforts abortive. Untrained as an observer, Galsworthy was unable to train himself to be one after deciding to make a career in letters for himself. His view of large problems, of the entirety of a situation is often penetrating; but he never became adept at recording accurately the telling details of character that mark artistic realism. His interest in other classes and their social problems, particularly in his later novels, is undeniable. His portrayal of the characters representing these classes is often sadly deficient.

One segment of "humanity at large" in which Galsworthy evinced keen interest and of which he had only slight knowledge was America and its citizens. His failure with American characters lay almost completely in his inability to note and record American patterns of speech with the necessary accuracy. The actions of Galsworthy's Americans are probable enough, but much of their speech is highly unlikely. It is a bit unsettling to suspect that Galsworthy's British readers mistook his recording of American English for the real thing.

²Marrot, p. 171.

As a matter of fact, Galsworthy's American English was much more believable in the early novels written before he made his first American tour in 1912. Until Galsworthy had been in America himself, middle class Americans in his novels used speech approximately equivalent to that given to middle class Englishmen.³ It was only after Galsworthy had had first-hand experience with Americans that he began to put into the mouths of his American characters such phraseology as would never have been used by an American writer. It is this consideration that again points up the fact that Galsworthy considered himself to be a more than adequate dialect writer. What he had actually done was to observe only the more spectacular divergences between American and British speech and to make the assumption that a locution used by one American was used by all Americans. His overuse of such expressions as "I reckon" and "I judge" for "I suppose" and of "gotten" for "got" in nearly all grammatical constructions bears out this supposition.

There is no reason why Galsworthy should have been ignorant of American English other than that he failed to hear American speech perceptively. Between 1912 and 1931 he made five trips to this country, spending a total of something over nineteen months in the United States and making stops at most of the major cities for at least long enough to deliver a lecture. He stayed for considerable lengths of time in New York, Washington, New Orleans, South Carolina, North Carolina, California, and Tucson; the rest of his time he spent in traveling or in one-night stands on the lecture platform. In the United States as in England, however, Galsworthy seldom ventured far from his social class; and it

³cf. John Galsworthy, Five Tales (New York, 1918).

is to his credit that he did not attempt to draw American characters from classes of which he was totally ignorant, the Americans in his novels including gentleman farmers, professors, and other upper middle class types.

Galsworthy did, however, stray from fidelity to experience in locating his characters geographically. In Maid in Waiting, the first novel of the trilogy called End of the Chapter, he chose for one of his chief protagonists Professor Hallorsen, a native of Wyoming, although Marrot's account of Galsworthy's travels in this country, extensively documented with quotations from Galsworthy's own notebook, makes no mention of a visit to that state. It is possible, indeed probable, that Galsworthy, having spent considerable time in California and Arizona, felt competent to portray a character from anywhere west of the Mississippi River. He was, perhaps, simply attracted by the sound of the name of the state, for he has Diana Ferse say in Maid in Waiting, "Delightful word, Wyoming."⁴ It is most likely that he did not realize there was any great difference to be noted between the speech of a native of Wyoming and that of a Californian.

His lack of acuity in making observations of Americans stemmed from no ill-will on his part toward America, for his notebook commentaries during his travels record a sincere admiration for America. His failure with American English was of a piece with his general failure to record accurately that with which he had only a superficial acquaintance.

⁴John Galsworthy, Maid in Waiting in End of the Chapter (New York, 1937), p. 62. End of the Chapter includes three novels--Maid in Waiting, Flowering Wilderness, and Over the River. Future reference will be to works in the volume by page number.

He was never with Americans long enough to know them really well, and he was unfortunately not sufficiently acute in his perception to grasp the essential qualities of American speech from brief acquaintance.

That he found America a pleasant denial of his preconceptions about it is evident in a letter to Professor Gilbert Murray, dated March 20, 1912, eight days after Galsworthy's arrival for his first tour.

This country is full of good things to eat; there are also . . . much hospitality and true politeness . . . a queer melancholy fascination about the negro faces; and above all the East Side streets in New York between 6 and 8 p.m.--the broad-faced swarming vitality there--don't miss it.⁵

After the 1912 trip he recorded in his notebook: "Found a curious state in America of aspiration towards good literature and art, but practically no production of it."⁶

These comments are fairly typical of those he made during the later trips, and the same general reaction is reflected in his novels. That the impression made on both the author and his wife displaced preconceived notions about this country is hinted at in a letter from Mrs. Galsworthy to Mabel Galsworthy Reynolds, also dated March 20, 1912. "Interviewers have not been at all unprincipled. . . . This was a great comfort and surprise."⁷ Galsworthy's disavowal of popular British ideas about America came later and more obliquely, voiced by Soames Forsyte about Francis Wilmot, a young American visitor to England, in The Silver Spoon, published in 1926 as the second novel of the Modern Comedy trilogy. It ran:

⁵Marrot, p. 334.

⁶Marrot, p. 341.

⁷Marrot, p. 335.

Soames was a good deal puzzled. He had never been in America. The inhabitants were human, of course, but peculiar . . . Their voices clanged in their mouths; they pronounced the words "very" and "America" in a way he had tried to imitate without success. . . . This young man cut across all these preconceptions. He . . . only spoke when spoken to . . . and his voice was soft.⁸

Galsworthy thus indirectly stated his defense of Americans against his countrymen's possibly stereotyped notions of them, probably, too, against his own original misconceptions.

Of Galsworthy's observation of America it is worth noting that he never came alone to the United States. He was always accompanied by his wife; and on the last trips they were attended by Galsworthy's nephew, Rudolf Sauter, and his wife. Galsworthy was, therefore, never isolated from England in America; and probably, as the central figure of an entourage, he was never obliged to do much toward making his own way in this country. If Galsworthy had ever made a visit to the United States by himself, it is possible that intimate contact with more individual Americans would have made a difference in the author's recording of the English language as used by his American characters.

⁸ John Galsworthy, The Silver Spoon in A Modern Comedy (New York, 1929), p. 285. A Modern Comedy includes three novels--The White Monkey, The Silver Spoon, and Swan Song--and two short stories, "A Silent Wooing," and "Passers By." Future references will be to works in the volume by page number.

CHAPTER IV

HE SHALL LEAD HIS SHEEP

In spite of his kindly notations and literary half-defenses of America and Americans, Galsworthy was apparently never quite able to resist a patronizing air in remarking on American manners and, particularly, American speech. His acidulous comments, furthermore, appear to have had little chronological relationship to his visits to this country, although his representation of American English became progressively worse as he heard more of it.

His cynical allusion to American speech in The Man of Property, written in 1902-1905 before he had ever crossed the Atlantic, is this: "In the more cultivated American tongue, /Francie Forsyte/ was 'through' at last."¹ Francie, verging on spinsterhood, was abandoning efforts to attract a prospective husband; but Galsworthy apparently thought a well-brought-up British girl would not have said she was "through." And in The Island Pharisees, the first book published (in 1904) under his own name, Galsworthy has two of his characters take note of American pronunciation of "produce." The characters find themselves next to two American ladies who "were discussing the emotions aroused in them by Wagner's operas. 'They projuice a strange condition of affairs in me,' said the thinner one."² There is no reason for this conversation save

¹The Man of Property, p. 173.

²John Galsworthy, The Island Pharisees, Devon Edition (New York, 1926), V, p. 128.

to make a point of the young author's linguistic skill and to jibe at American speech; yet Galsworthy does not in this passage sneer openly, probably because he had not yet heard enough American English to consider himself an expert on it.

He is obviously satirical, however, in 1931 after five visits to the United States when he has Sir Lawrence Mont remark in Maid in Waiting, "It's manner . . . that divides [America and England], manner and language . . . Having what used to be the same language is undoubtedly a snare. We must hope for such a development of the American lingo as will necessitate our both learning each other's."³

His attitude toward Americans, linguistically, was like that of a patient shepherd prodding the straying American sheep back into the fold of pure British English. He could not, of course, have been completely serious in speaking of the mutual unintelligibility of the two languages--unless, perhaps, he was thinking of the speech of the American characters in his own novels, language which could, indeed, be misunderstood by either Englishmen or Americans.

Galsworthy patiently corrects the wayward Americans throughout his novels, especially the later ones. In The Silver Spoon he introduces this conversation between that epitome of British propriety, Soames Forsyte, and Francis Wilmot, the young American who had cut across Soames's preconceptions:

"I want to see the Beefeaters; and Cruft's Dog Show; and your blood horses; and the Derby."

"Darby!" Soames corrected.⁴

³Maid in Waiting, p. 49.

⁴The Silver Spoon, p. 285.

Here, of course, Soames (and Galsworthy) may be within their linguistic rights; Soames is, after all, instructing an American on British pronunciation. Unfortunately, though, Soames and his creator are no less condescending away from England than in it: Galsworthy allows Soames no hint of his own error in this conversation with a Washington, D.C., cab driver in "Passers By."

/Soames directed/, "Hotel Pótomac."

"Hotel Potómac?"

"If you prefer it."

The cab driver grinned and shut Soames in.⁵

Here, Galsworthy is able to make clear the error of American pronunciation by a shift of the accent mark, and in the example previously cited he resorted to phonetic spelling to make his point. But no artistic sacrifice was too great for Galsworthy when he set out to patronize American speech. Even if, as may well be, these exchanges are intended only to delineate the character of Soames, the spelling shifts and accent marks prove a distraction to the reader.

One might wish, though, that Galsworthy had been always so explicit in marking the differences between American and British pronunciation, rather than leaving the reader to puzzle through such recordings as this one of a conversation between British Jon Forsyte and his wife Anne, a native South Carolinian:

/Anne said/, "Rondavel's off his feed.
Greenwater's very upset about him."

"'Very,' Anne."

⁵ John Galsworthy, "Passers By" in A Modern Comedy (New York, 1929), p. 510.

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"Well, you can't pronounce 'very' as I pronounce it, /any more/ than I can as you do."⁶

Galsworthy had already confessed that Americans pronounced "very" in a way that Soames, and presumably the author, could not imitate; he apparently feels here that he should not even attempt to show the exact nature of Anne's error so patiently corrected by her husband.

The remainder of this conversation is of interest, both as a picture of Galsworthy the linguistic shepherd and as an example of his artistic failure in trying to point out phonological distinctions in American and British speech.

/Jon continued/, ". . . you told me to remind you. It's silly, though: why shouldn't you speak your own lingo?"

"I want to talk like the rest of you."

"Want, then, not waunt."

"Damn!" /One can hardly blame her!/

"But isn't your lingo just as good?"

"No, you don't think that. You're awfully glad to be through with the American accent . . . Well I do want--there!--to speak English."⁷

Anyone who could muddle through that conversation ought to be able to speak anything! One wonders what language Anne thinks she has been speaking all her life, although she might well at this point be convinced that she speaks something other than English; for her learning the language was quite a topic of conversation among the Forsytes upon her arrival in England. Fleur says to Jon in discussing Anne's

⁶John Galsworthy, Swan Song in A Modern Comedy (New York, 1929), p. 668.

⁷Swan Song, p. 668.

adjustment to her new home, "I suppose she's picking up English fast."⁸ Hopefully, Anne was able to make herself understood through sign language until she acquired this unfamiliar tongue.

Galsworthy's insistence on Anne's learning to "speak English" was all of a piece with his general misconception (and that of a number of other equally erudite people) that "English" is one thing and "American" quite another. Certainly there are differences between the English language as it is spoken in this country and as it is spoken by Britishers; but there are regional variants in both countries quite as striking. The speech of a Cornishman, for instance, is markedly different from that of a Welshman. So, too, does the speech of a Tennessean differ from that of a native of Massachusetts; but one never hears that a person speaks Tennessean unless the remark is made facetiously. Galsworthy was unable to make this linguistic distinction, and he cherished, at least with half his mind, the notion that "English" and "American" might really be two different languages. One wonders how he accounted for the wide and remunerative sale of his novels in a country speaking a different language; perhaps he thought his New York publishers translated them.

He may well have thought so; or, at least, his nephew, Rudolf Sauter, who was Galsworthy's companion on his later American tours, may have. Mr. Sauter remarked in his journal in December, 1925, that it was "extraordinary how difficult Americans find it to understand English as pronounced by an Englishman."⁹ Mrs. Galsworthy, too, made an early jab

⁸Swan Song, p. 665.

⁹Marrot, p. 566.

at American pronunciation, heading a letter to Galsworthy's sister on April 22, 1912, "On Rowte (as they say here) to Washington."¹⁰

Near the end of his life Galsworthy did become a bit more sophisticated in his linguistic recording and a bit less dismayed that variant pronunciations continued to exist. In Flowering Wilderness, published in 1932, Lady Mont says, "They don't have /the cuckoo/ in America . . . Perhaps they don't fall in love there. Your uncle'll know. He came back /from America/ with a story about a poppa in Nooport. For that you must fall in love."¹¹ Galsworthy, at least, developed more subtlety in his jeering.

¹⁰Marrot, p. 337.

¹¹John Galsworthy, Flowering Wilderness in End of the Chapter (New York, 1937), p. 138.

CHAPTER V

AWAY DOWN SOUTH IN ARIZONA OR MISSOURI OR SOMEWHERE

A part of America particularly intriguing to Galsworthy was the South. As early as his second American tour in 1919, he evidenced his fascination with the people and places of the South, writing to Rudolf Sauter on March 18, 1919, from Charleston, South Carolina, "The Southern voices (evidently deeply founded on darkey nurses) are very soft and pretty . . ."¹ It seems doubly a pity that, interested in the South as he was, his admiration for Southern speech was colored by the popular linguistic myth that Southern speech is primarily influenced by that of servants of African origin, rather than by that of emigrants from an area encompassing his own ancestral Devon.²

He was, in fact, somewhat confused as to the geographical limits of the Southland he so admired. In Flowering Wilderness he quotes from an interview imagined by an Englishman as being conducted by an American reporter: "Here were evidences of this aristocrat's early life in our glorious Southland. Here we sensed his adventurous existence in the wide open spaces of New Mexico, Arizona, and Sonora . . ."³

On his third trip to this country he met in New York "a Southern gentleman, Colonel Kyarter (Carter) by name."⁴ The third trip also included one-night-stands on the lecture platform in New Orleans,

¹Marrot, p. 473.

²Thomas Pyles, The Origin and Development of the English Language (New York, 1964), p. 56.

³Flowering Wilderness, p. 115.

⁴Marrot, p. 500.

Montgomery, and Savannah. After a ten-day stay at Southern Pines, North Carolina, the Galsworthy party went on to Washington, D.C., for a few days before journeying to New York and sailing from there for England on The Adriatic. On board ship the Galsworthys met a woman he designated (with no hint of having his tongue in his cheek) as "Thedda Bahr (vampire of films)."5

The longest time period of this tour--ten weeks--had been spent at the San Ysidro Ranch near Santa Barbara, California, in the interest of Mrs. Galsworthy's health. That the Galsworthys were fascinated by the South is evident in a comment by Mrs. Galsworthy in a letter to Galsworthy's sister, Mrs. Reynolds, dated December 4, 1920, from San Ysidro that their "little cottage /looked/ as if it ought to have darkie faces at its windows."6 It is puzzling to try to think what would cause a cottage to look so.

It was after this third trip that Galsworthy introduced into The Forsyte Chronicles7 two of his most engaging and durable American characters, Francis Willmot and his sister Anne, later Anne Forsyte. These two come into the narrative in "A Silent Wooing"--one of the short stories Galsworthy called "interludes" that link together the novels in the first two trilogies in The Forsyte Chronicles--published in 1925 and set near Camden, South Carolina. It is here that young Jon Forsyte, a transplanted Britisher, meets Francis and Anne; and these young people

5Marrot, p. 503.

6Marrot, p. 505.

7This is the title used by Galsworthy to indicate all his writing on the Forsytes--nine novels and four "interludes" besides an extra volume of short stories.

appear to be objects of mutual curiosity. Francis feels that he must explain Anne's silence to Jon. "'It's kind of lonely where we live,' said Francis. 'Mostly darkies. Anne's never seen an Englishman to speak to.'"⁸ In fact, Galsworthy had to move Jon quite a long way to get him into the Southern locale and in view of Anne. When last heard of at the end of To Let, young Forsyte was living in British Columbia.⁹

Having spoken to an Englishman, however, Anne and her brother proceed to entertain him with stereotyped explanations of Southern sociology phrased in language which Galsworthy, having spent ten days in a neighboring state on his most recent tour and ten days in South Carolina itself a year earlier, must have thought to represent the speech of Southerners. For example, Francis Wilmot explains the old Southern custom of lynching to Jon this way:

"All you Britishers go off the deep-end when you read of a lynching. You don't have the negro problem up where you are at Southern Pines. They don't have it any to speak of in North Carolina . . . we'd sooner do without an innocent darkie now and again than risk our women."¹⁰

In answer to Jon's question as to how this practice is received in the North, Francis admits that "they squeal a bit, but they've no call to," and he concludes his amazing recital with this Old-West-Old-South linguistic mish-mash:

"I reckon there's too much space left in this country . . . a man has all the chances to get off. So where we feel strong about a thing, we take the law into our own hands."¹¹

⁸John Galsworthy, "A Silent Wooing" in A Modern Comedy (New York, 1929), p. 253.

⁹To Let, p. 908.

¹⁰"A Silent Wooing," p. 251.

¹¹"A Silent Wooing," p. 252.

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One can almost see Francis Wilmot joining Huck Finn to "light out for the territory," where he will undoubtedly be apprehended by Marshalls Matt Dillon, Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, et al. Galsworthy could be deluded by both sociological and linguistic stereotypes.

In both sociology and linguistics, this passage is typical of Galsworthy's deficiencies in dealing with characters from a world not his own. Not only is it unlikely that a young man of Wilmot's character, one represented as both charming and cultivated, would so readily accept the practice of lynching, it is equally improbable that he would use "reckon" on all occasions or that he would use "strong" as an adverb. In fact, the speech patterns of the entire passage appear to shift as Galsworthy reaches his peroration. In the earlier part of the conversation, Francis' speech lacks the gun-slinger air that it has in the final paragraph. This latter speech strikes one as inconsistent to a young man supposed to have had the benefits of both a Roman Catholic upbringing and a classical education.

However, Galsworthy had almost certainly heard some Southerners use "reckon" in the sense of "believe" or "suppose"; and he, therefore, "reckoned" that all Southerners so used it at every opportunity. The following are but a few citations of his use of this assumedly Southern locution:

Francis Wilmot reckoned that he was hungry.¹²

/Anne Wilmot/: I reckon we'd better stop here
till the moon rises.¹³

¹²"A Silent Wooing," p. 253.

¹³"A Silent Wooing," p. 258.

/Anne Wilmot/: I reckon we'll have to sell the old home.¹⁴

/Francis Wilmot, apologizing/: I reckon I didn't mean it.¹⁵

/Francis Wilmot/: There are a few saints in every country proof against your theory /of idealism/; but the rest of us, I reckon, aren't above human nature.¹⁶

Yet Anne says to Jon, "I suppose you had a classical education. Don't you all have that in England?"¹⁷ Here Galsworthy not only prevents Anne's saying "I reckon," letting her use the more likely "I suppose," but also, either by fortuitous chance or uncommon accuracy, gets the Southern "you all" correctly idiomatic.

Reintroducing Francis Wilmot in The Silver Spoon, set in England, Galsworthy has this young man to speak most of the time more nearly as a Southerner of his class and generation would speak, with only two notable lapses. Young Wilmot observes that he has noticed little farming activity in England as he came "on the cars, from Liverpool."¹⁸ Almost certainly a prototype of Francis would have said "on the train," not "on the cars." In the other instance, Galsworthy lets Francis revert to his bushwhacker speech of the early pages of "A Silent Wooing," having him say of a dog succeeding a pet whose eyes had been clawed out by a cat, "This little fellow would chaw any cat."¹⁹ Whether he meant "chaw"

¹⁴"A Silent Wooing," p. 255.

¹⁵"A Silent Wooing," p. 262.

¹⁶The Silver Spoon, p. 294.

¹⁷"A Silent Wooing," p. 255.

¹⁸The Silver Spoon, p. 287.

¹⁹The Silver Spoon, p. 270.

to indicate "chew" or "claw" it is impossible to determine; however, the use of the word is almost surely not a typographical error since it appears as cited in various editions of the book. The usage can only be another of Galsworthy's unperceptive renderings of American speech.

There is a surprising hint in "A Silent Wooing" as to the origin of some of Galsworthy's notions of American speech, especially the speech of Southerners. In thinking of Anne Wilmot, young Jon Forsythe muses, "More and more she seemed to him unlike any girl he had ever known; quicker, more silent, and with more 'sand!'"²⁰ The word is in Jon's mind, and it is set in quotation marks, as it properly should be; for it is not Jon's word at all: it is Huckleberry Finn's. Huck's last thought of Mary Jane Wilks, the girl who provides the only suggestion of romance in Mark Twain's classic, was, "She was the best girl I ever see, and had the most sand."²¹

It is certainly possible that Galsworthy could have been influenced by Mark Twain's recording of Southern speech. Young Galsworthy was a bookish youngster, an omnivorous reader; and he was seventeen years old in 1884 when The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was published. It is almost impossible to imagine that he missed reading the book, although Marrot makes no mention of his having done so. If Galsworthy's mind was not perceptive, it was retentive; and it is not altogether impossible to imagine that he might have made recourse to Mark Twain's record of Southern speech for reference when American Southerners were introduced into his work. If he did refer to Twain, the mixed quality of Francis

²⁰"A Silent Wooing," p. 263.

²¹Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Signet Classic Edition (New York, 1959), p. 200.

Wilmot's speech would be better explained; for Galsworthy lacked the linguistic subtlety to grasp the essential differences between the speech of a young Missouri outcast and that of a young South Carolina aristocrat: they were both Southerners, and Galsworthy was not one to quibble over American caste and geography. It might be, too, that he borrowed unconsciously. Whatever the possibilities, it is a shame he did not acquire Mark Twain's gift for linguistic accuracy.

Certainly Galsworthy was influenced by other writers, and other American writers at that. There are numerous parallels between his writing and that of William Dean Howells; the death of the troublesome Bosinney of The Man of Property--his death left a question of accident or suicide--was modeled after the disposition of one of Howell's characters, at the suggestion of Edward Garnett.²² None of this is to accuse Galsworthy of plagiarism: it is again to deplore his failure in accurate recording of language, and it is certainly to note that in many speeches Francis Wilmot sounds very much more like Huckleberry Finn than the kind of young man Galsworthy intended him to be.

Anne Forsyte, née Wilmot, also suffered linguistic schizophrenia upon being moved to England. Although introduced as a reserved, rather shy girl in "A Silent Wooing," the Anne who reappears in Swan Song is characterized by an effusive kind of speech, probably the speech that Galsworthy thought to be that of the typical American young woman. In Swan Song Anne is introduced to Fleur Forsyte Mont, who thinks Anne's voice "only faintly American, as if Jon had been at it,"²³ and Anne's

²²Marrot, p. 166.

²³Swan Song, p. 570.

first speech is, "You were just too good to Francis."²⁴ On being asked if she had a good Channel crossing, Anne replies, "Frightful! . . . I do so hate being green, don't you?"²⁵ again showing a lapse on Galsworthy's part: "being green" is not an American term for sea-sickness.

But Anne quickly returns to the overly enthusiastic style assigned her by her creator. She thinks a trip to Jon's childhood home at Robin Hill would be "just too lovely,"²⁶ that Fleur's son is "just too cunning,"²⁷ that the view from Richmond Hill is "too lovely."²⁸ In giving Anne's reaction to Warmson's Inn, Galsworthy says, "To young Anne Forsyte all was 'just too, too lovely.'"²⁹ It certainly was, and it was Galsworthy's overcharacterization that made it so.

Swan Song was published in 1928; by the time Galsworthy wrote Maid in Waiting in 1930, he had apparently forgotten that a gushing style was supposed to typify American speech. His British heroine, Dinny Charwell, the maid in waiting, uses "terribly" repeatedly: Professor Hallorsen is "terribly polite,"³⁰ the light at a hunt is "terribly puzzling,"³¹ Professor Hallorsen's explanation is "terribly interesting,"³²

²⁴Swan Song, p. 570.

²⁵Swan Song, p. 570.

²⁶Swan Song, p. 580.

²⁷Swan Song, p. 581.

²⁸Swan Song, p. 583.

²⁹Swan Song, p. 608.

³⁰Maid in Waiting, p. 62.

³¹Maid in Waiting, p. 72.

³²Maid in Waiting, p. 83.

it was "terribly good"³³ of a friend to call, to sit for her portrait would be "terribly exciting."³⁴ On the whole, Dinny out-gushes Anne, tending to defeat Galsworthy's scheme for characterization through speech patterns. It is impossible to guess whether Galsworthy intended Anne's too-enthusiastic speech to typify an American Southerner or just any American. However, since Anne is from the South, it may be supposed that her speech is meant to be that of the Southern girl.

The Anne of "A Silent Wooing," still in South Carolina, had earlier involved Galsworthy in the South's nightmare, the Race Problem; but, happily, Galsworthy's problem was only linguistic. That he failed to solve it is only characteristic of his writing. Probably Galsworthy's failure with Negro speech and his references to Negroes is one of his worst, but such a failure is consistent with his other errors; dealing with people he could barely consider people, despite his protestations to a social conscience, was simply beyond him. One such amazing reference is in this conversation between Anne Wilmot and Jon Forsyte, here lost temporarily in a pine forest:

"This is a real adventure. It is black.
I'd have been scared alone--seems kind of spooky
here."

"Spirits of old Indians," muttered Jon. "Only
I don't believe in spirits."

"You would if you'd had a coloured nanny."³⁵

"Coloured nanny" indeed! Anne goes on to describe this creature as having had a "voice as soft as mush melon."³⁶ Francis Wilmot later

³³Maid in Waiting, p. 89.

³⁴Maid in Waiting, p. 94.

³⁵"A Silent Wooing," p. 259.

characterizes his old family retainers to Soames Forsyte as "old folk that knew my grannies."³⁷ Such a speech was never uttered by a normal Southern boy!

Mercifully, Galsworthy attempts Negro dialect only once; and he does have the forethought to put it into the mouth of an Englishman so that the faulty reproduction could be taken to be that of his character, not himself. Michael Mont, caught in the snarls of a marital coil, wanders about his London townhouse alone in the dead of night, confused and unhappy. He seats himself at his clavichord and sings to himself a plaintive little song to soothe his sorrow:

I got a crown, you got a crown--all God's
children got a crown! 'Eb'ry-one dat talk
about 'Eaben ain't goin' dere. All God's
children got a crown.³⁸

Now, that is real Negro-Cockney dialect! He misses the typically Negro "chillun" and "gwine," but drops the h's in the best Cockney tradition.

Nevertheless, Galsworthy acquired in the South a useful expression, which he began to use in his journal without the quotation marks he customarily used to designate a word he considered either uncommon or not quite acceptable. During his stay in Washington, D.C., in March, 1919, he recorded in his diary, "Prof. and Mrs. Collier toted us round very kindly."³⁹ On the same tour, in Charleston, South Carolina, the Galsworthy party "met a very nice sculptress called Elizabeth Hare, with a quiet interior laugh not very common in Americans. She it was who

³⁷The Silver Spoon, p. 286.

³⁸The Silver Spoon, p. 346.

³⁹Marrot, p. 473.

. . . toted us round to some of the more original and independent studios . . ."⁴⁰ Galsworthy had here made three connections, only one of them false. He had observed the American equating of "to carry" and "to escort"; he further knew that "to tote" was for some Southerners the equivalent of "to carry." Therefore, he concluded that if "to escort" is equal to "to carry" and "to carry" is equal to "to tote," then "to tote" must be equal to "to escort." Well, it was a near miss. And, in all fairness, it must be added that he never wrote this particular linguistic error into the conversation of any of his fictional characters. Someone must have told him of his mistake.

CHAPTER VI

AN OLD COWHAND FROM THE BOLIVIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPEDITION

Less fascinating to Galsworthy, but the section of this country in which he spent the most time, was the American West; and the third American character of major importance in his novels is a Westerner, although his speech is not markedly different from that of Galsworthy's Southerners. This character is a Professor Edward Hallorsen, an anthropologist from Wyoming. Galsworthy himself was never in Wyoming, and it has been suggested earlier that he possibly chose that state as the home of his professor simply for its phonology: he liked the sound of the word and thought to have, thus, sufficient opportunity to repeat it. Actually, Galsworthy spent most of his time in the West in Arizona and California.

Hallorsen appears in the London of the early 1930's, the London of Maid in Waiting; and, juxtaposed to various Monts, Forsytes, and Charwells, he comes off as something less than totally civilized.¹ Stuart Robinson has written of Galsworthy's portrayal of Hallorsen the following observation:

What he says, very much more than what he does, contributes to this impression /of his being a boor/. The total effect is wrong . . . Hallorsen is alternately too loud and too soft. He is too loud, because his creator's effort to catch the liveliness of the American tongue lacks all verisimilitude. "The moment his bluff's called--Why! Wump!" This is not exactly convincing; nor do such remarks as "Gee" and "Cats" hit the mark, given the character and the situation. . . .

¹In Swan Song Galsworthy described Anne's eyes as "not quite civilised, nor quite American," p. 668.

On the other hand, he is too soft, because Mr. Galsworthy has given him phrases that are, properly, feminine and feminine only. . . . "So cunning," "Just too lovely"--strange phrases indeed in the mouth of this "he-man" from the "great open spaces"!²

Not only are these "soft" phrases strange "in the mouth of this he-man," so is much of his speech. For one thing, Hallorsen alternates between speaking standard British English and what Galsworthy took to be the speech of an American Westerner so frequently that the effectiveness of his character is spoiled; the reader never feels Hallorsen to be a person because, at least in part, his fluctuating speech patterns keep him too inconsistent to become believable.

Hallorsen is introduced to the reader early in the novel as he calls on Adrian Charwell, the curator of a London museum, who happens to be the uncle of a man with whom Hallorsen has had a quarrel on a recently completed expedition to Bolivia. Upon receiving the curator's card, Hallorsen--an anthropologist of some international fame, a thirty-eight-year-old university professor--exclaims, "Gee! Are you related to the Captain Charwell who's got his knife into me?"³ The curator acknowledges the relationship but icily corrects Hallorsen's pronunciation of his name, "We pronounce the name Cherrell, if you don't mind."⁴

² Stuart Robinson, "American Speech According to Galsworthy," American Speech, VII (April, 1932), p. 298.

³ Maid in Waiting, p. 28.

⁴ Maid in Waiting, p. 28.

Nothing daunted, Hallorsen states his mission, which is to see the museum's collection of Peruvian skulls. "I'm told your Peruvian skulls are bully,"⁵ he says, and offers to let Curator Charwell compare them to the "little Bolivian lot"⁶ of skulls he has brought along with him. One cannot help thinking of Chaucer's Pardoner's "glas of pigges bones," although one supposes that Hallorsen would carry his Bolivian skulls about in a burlap bag or something else more sturdy than glass.

Despite the argument in which Hallorsen is involved with the Charwell family, Adrian Charwell arranges to have Professor Hallorsen and the sister of the man with whom he is in disagreement, Charwell's niece Dinny, meet at a dinner party given by a mutual friend. The Professor Hallorsen who is presented to Dinny is not the same "bully" man of his encounter with her uncle.

"Your daughter, I presume, Mr. Curator?"

"No, my niece; a sister of Captain Hubert Cherrell."

"Is that so? I am honoured to make your acquaintance, Ma'am."

Adrian, noting that their eyes, having crossed, seemed to find it difficult to disengage,⁷ said:

"How are you liking the Piedmont Hotel,⁷ Professor?"

"The cooking's fine, but there are too many of us Americans."

"Perching just now like the swallows?"

"Ah! In a fortnight we'll all have flitted."⁸

⁵Maid in Waiting, p. 28.

⁶Maid in Waiting, p. 28.

⁷What Galsworthy means here (I think) is not that they have become cross-eyed but that they can't take their eyes off each other.

⁸Maid in Waiting, pp. 52-53.

This is, indeed, not the same man who greeted a museum curator with "Gee!" Except for the questionable "make your acquaintance," the "Ma'am" which an Englishman would reserve for royalty, and "fine" used in a quasi-adverbial sense, his speech is that of any sophisticate, regardless of nationality. Yet, even in so short a passage, the consistency of Hallorsen's character is violated through Galsworthy's misuse of language. The same man would be unlikely to follow "The cooking's fine" with "In a fortnight we'll all have flitted." A man from Wyoming, no matter his degree of sophistication, would probably never say "fortnight" at all; and it is difficult to imagine what manner of person would say "we'll all have flitted."

Again, Galsworthy's bad linguistic ear has played him false, allowing him to consider certain well-known deviations of American speech from British speech to be characteristic of all American speakers. The adverbial use of "fine" was one of his pet shibboleths, and Galsworthy put it into the mouths of most of his American characters. In The Silver Spoon Francis Willmot says ". . . I've got some mighty nice darkies that cook fine . . ."9 (These were the "old folk that knew his grannies.") A clerk in a Washington, D.C., hotel advises Soames Forsyte in "Passers By" that "they cook fine at Filler's Restaurant."10 And Professor Hallorsen says to a British acquaintance, "This Whitehall of yours makes me feel fine."11

⁹The Silver Spoon, p. 286.

¹⁰"Passers By," p. 511.

¹¹Maid in Waiting, p. 93.

Another locution that Galsworthy recorded erroneously was that of the American use of "gotten" instead of "got" in some constructions. Galsworthy, however, used "gotten" in nearly all constructions when the speaker was American. Professor Hallorsen says to Dinny, "I fear you've gotten a grouch against me, Miss Cherrell,"¹² and later in explaining the differences in the American and English character he says, ". . . We're a new people; we haven't gotten your roots and your old things; we haven't gotten your habit of taking ourselves for granted . . . Where you British irritate us is that you've lost the spirit of enquiry; or if you've still gotten it, you've a dandy way of hiding it up."¹³ Later on in the novel, the professor evaluates London, "Well, a stranger can't tell why he loves London, unless it's the variety and the way you've gotten freedom and order all mixed up."¹⁴ Freedom and order aren't all that are mixed up; so is Galsworthy's use of "gotten." About half of these examples strike the ear as right, and the other half are laughably wrong: Galsworthy was simply unable to distinguish what was idiomatic from what was not. One of his least apt uses of "gotten" is in "A Silent Wooing," when Francis Wilmot invites Jon Forsyte to his room for a drink where "I've gotten a flask."¹⁵

Another way in which Professor Hallorsen's speech is inconsistent lies in his use of the more flamboyant Americanisms sprinkled, apparently unconsciously, by his creator among British speech patterns not used at all by Americans. The "if you've still gotten it, you've a dandy way of hiding it up" cited above is one such mixture. Later on

¹²Maid in Waiting, p. 56.

¹³Maid in Waiting, p. 83.

¹⁴Maid in Waiting, p. 192.

¹⁵"A Silent Wooing," p. 262.

Professor Hallorsen refuses to tell Dinny the details of his quarrel with her brother because "You'd have it up against me if I were to tell you."¹⁶ Still later he invites Dinny to visit America. "You would enjoy America, Miss Cherrell; I would like to show it you some day."¹⁷ American speech patterns--certainly not those of the Far West--do not include such expressions as "hide it up," "have it up against me," and "show it you." The trouble with Hallorsen is that one never knows what he is going to say next--or in what national pattern he is going to say it.

Unfortunately for Hallorsen, Galsworthy often makes him say the wrong thing at the wrong time. In his first confrontation with Hubert Charwell after their serious disagreement, Hallorsen meets him in the company of his uncle, Sir Lawrence Mont, already known to Hallorsen, and his father, General Charwell, a stranger to the professor who greets them inclusively with, "Sir Lawrence Mont. Ah! Captain! General Sir Conway Cherrell? Proud to meet you, General. And what can I do for you gentlemen?"¹⁸ In greeting the general, Hallorsen sounds like the good guy in a cowboy movie, as he does again in this passage with Dinny when she rejects his proposal of marriage. "I judge I haven't done enough for you. I'll have to serve a bit."¹⁹ One can almost see him scuffing his boot toe in the dirt of Dead Man's Gulch! Approaching a British official of some importance he asks, "Is this the Foreign Office?"

¹⁶Maid in Waiting, p. 81.

¹⁷Maid in Waiting, p. 93.

¹⁸Maid in Waiting, p. 136.

¹⁹Maid in Waiting, p. 171.

I'm just wondering whether that guy will be in?"²⁰ Surely he gained instant admittance. In making his rejected offer of marriage to Dinny, he cautions her, "I've no use for adultery. I want a straight deal in sex as in everything else."²¹ Probably Dinny refused him for fear of being gunned down in the street.

She need not have feared violence at the hands of the professor, though. What could be violent in a man who would call a top hat "so cunning"²² and would say to her, "I like you terribly,"²³ or one who thought her fairness in being objective about his quarrel with her brother "just wonderful"?²⁴ Surely a girl need not fear a man who would say of London, "I just love it."²⁵

Galsworthy does exchange the "I reckon" of his Southerners for "I judge" to be used by his Westerner. Asked if he and Hubert Charwell ever understood each other, Hallorsen replies, "I judge we never did,"²⁶ and he says of Hubert's inability to adjust to life in the jungle, "Why, I judge he would have dressed for dinner if we'd have let him."²⁷ One of

²⁰Maid in Waiting, p. 187.

²¹Maid in Waiting, p. 171.

²²Maid in Waiting, p. 187.

²³Maid in Waiting, p. 82.

²⁴Maid in Waiting, p. 93.

²⁵Maid in Waiting, p. 192.

²⁶Maid in Waiting, p. 81.

²⁷Maid in Waiting, p. 81.

Hallorsen's most comically mixed speeches is his farewell to Dinny after she refuses to marry him: "Well, I judge there's no use crying over spilt milk. Command me in any way. I am your very faithful servant."²⁸ This must be one of the most schizophrenic speeches in terms of language fidelity ever written, even by Galsworthy.

An Americanism that Galsworthy did give both to his Southerners and his Westerner was "bully." This word is cited by H.L. Mencken as one gaining popularity in England after having passed from common use in America. He says that "bully" became wide-spread in British usage after its use by the Prince of Wales in a speech made in 1930.²⁹ This fact would account for Galsworthy's having his American characters use the word so often, and so inaccurately, for it was in 1930 that he was writing Maid in Waiting. Adopting the word as a genuine Americanism, he made frequent use of it. Anne Wilmot Forsyte, learning to speak "English" instead of "American," corrects herself in using the word. "'Bully!'" said Anne, 'I mean--er--splendid.'³⁰ Besides having heard that Curator Charwell's Peruvian skulls were "bully," Hallorsen says to Dinny when she tells him she intends to go to stay with a friend whose husband has just returned from the mad house, "That's bully of you!"³¹ When Dinny admits that they don't know whether the returning mental case is dangerous or not, Hallorsen gives her an automatic pistol to keep in her purse; and he adds, "I bought it for this country, seeing you don't go

²⁸Maid in Waiting, p. 172.

²⁹H.L. Mencken, The American Language, Fourth Edition (New York, 1943), p. 229.

³⁰Swan Song, p. 668.

³¹Maid in Waiting, p. 171.

about with guns here."³² Sometimes it is difficult to believe that Galsworthy really did make those five American tours.

Certainly he never met the prototype of Hallorsen in America or anywhere else. Galsworthy's inability to characterize Hallorsen is, indeed, one of his worst failures in depicting a believable character, and the failure need not have been made. Galsworthy had met American professors on his tours, probably even Western American professors; there are pages and pages of lists of people he met in America recorded in Marrot's biography. Had his ear for language been more acute, there is no reason he could not have created a recognizable American professor. As Robinson says, Hallorsen didn't behave boorishly; he only sounded uncouth.

When, in writing The Man of Property during the very earliest days of his career in letters, Galsworthy felt himself unable to characterize Philip Bosinney faithfully, he agonized over his inability to do so and spent months in revision of the novel, principally in an effort to delineate better this one character.³³ There is no record of his even sensing his failure with Hallorsen. Yet the reason he failed with both is the same: they were people whose prototypes he did not know intimately. His failure with Bosinney, however, was that he didn't know how such a man would act; with Hallorsen he failed in not knowing how an American should talk. Had he taken the pains with Hallorsen's speech that he did with Bosinney's actions, the professor might have lived after all.

³²Maid in Waiting, p. 171.

³³cf. correspondence with Edward Garnett in Marrot, pp. 165-178.

CHAPTER VII

TO ERR IS HUMAN, TO FORGIVE DIVINE

In recording what he thought to be American English, Galsworthy's intent was, in all liklihood, of the best, both in terms of a genuine fondness for America and Americans and in terms of recording changes in the English language. His notebooks and letters are peppered with compliments to America (once he recovered from the initial shock of discovering that it wasn't England); and from his first major novel, The Man of Property, to his last one, Over the River, there is a continuing sense of this awareness of linguistic development.

His jibing reference in The Man of Property to "the more cultivated American tongue" has been noted earlier. In that same novel, he characterizes George Forsyte, the "wild one" of the second-generation Forsytes, as having been "he who invented many of those striking expressions still current in fashionable circles," having him voice the opinion that "Soames was about 'fed up.'"¹ Galsworthy says of George again, in the second novel of his first trilogy, that "it was he who invented so many of those quaint sayings which have been assigned to other sources."² (George had just said "O.K.") The author's tongue is obviously in his cheek in his references to George, but he is more nearly serious when he has Soames think in In Chancery that young Jolyon's marriage to his own

¹The Man of Property, p. 239.

²In Chancery, p. 385.

former wife, Irene, had been "'a nasty jar'--in the phraseology of the day."³ Typical of Galsworthy's allusions to the changing both of language and customs is this passage from Maid in Waiting, an exchange between Lady Mont and her niece, Clare Charwell:

"Are you to wed, Clare?"

"To 'wed'! Aunt Em!"

"I think it's rather sweet, the uneducated papers use it."⁴

When Galsworthy knew himself to be using American words and expressions, he was careful to point out this awareness; he seems sometimes, however, to have been unaware of his use of American English or ignorant of the American origin of the language he used. He lets Soames react scathingly to "fallen for" in a conversation between himself and his daughter Fleur in The Silver Spoon:

Fleur smiled acidly, "Francis Wilmot? Oh! he's 'fallen for' Marjorie Ferrar."

"'Fallen for her'?" said Soames. "What an expression!"

"Yes, dear; it's American."⁵

Yet in Swan Song, the last novel in his second trilogy, of which The Silver Spoon is the middle one, he grants a kind of half-acceptance to American linguistic imports in a conversation between Fleur and her new American cousin-in-law, Anne Wilmot Forsyte, as Anne thanks

³In Chancery, p. 618.

⁴Maid in Waiting, p. 286.

⁵The Silver Spoon, p. 394.

Fleur for letting her become a part of a fashionable canteen operation during the British General Strike of 1926.

"I think it's just wonderful of you to let me come and help."

"Not a bit. Holly [Anne's sister-in-law] will put you wise."

"That sounds nice and homey."

"Oh! We all use your expressions now."⁶

One of those expressions was not "homey" in the sense Galsworthy had Anne give it in that speech, but the significant aspect of the passage is that Galsworthy does not enclose "put you wise" in the quotation marks he had customarily used to indicate a usage of dubious acceptability. Nor does he use them when Dinny says in Maid in Waiting to a slum girl being saved from herself by Bishop Hilary Charwell, "Some rebel!--as the Americans would say!"⁷

At least one of the expressions Galsworthy imputes to America seems doubtful as having ever come from any source at all save Galsworthy's imaginings. In Swan Song Soames muses in Winchester Cathedral, "To be here was like being within a jewelled and somewhat scented box . . . This great box--God-box the Americans would call it--had been made centuries before the world became industrialised . . ."⁸ One wonders just what caused Galsworthy to think "the Americans"--or anyone else--would call a cathedral a "God-box." Perhaps he had overstrained himself in becoming permissive.

⁶Swan Song, p. 570.

⁷Maid in Waiting, p. 178.

⁸Swan Song, p. 165.

Americanisms used without either comment or quotation marks did sometimes slip into Galsworthy's writing, whether accidentally or not it is impossible to tell. Such occurrences are more frequent in his later works, but as early as 1910 he has The Earl of Valley in The Patrician contemplate a newspaper article with which he disagrees with these thoughts: "That paper, though clever, always seemed to him intolerably hi-falutin'!"⁹ Mencken in The American Language marks "highfalutin" as one of a group of words resulting from the influence of Mark Twain and Walt Whitman in causing "a wild and lawless development of . . . uncouth words and phrases."¹⁰ Perhaps Galsworthy had absorbed this word, too, from Mark Twain.

Another famous American expression was used at least twice by Galsworthy without notation of its origin. In The Silver Spoon Soames, witnessing a divorce action in court, thinks, "Reading the libellous letters now! Effect of them! . . . very made up, all that! . . . Plaintiff obliged to take action . . . Bunkum!"¹¹ Again, in the short story "Soames and the Flag," a part of the volume of Forsyte addenda called On Forsyte 'Change, Soames thinks of his suspicions of a possible World War I spy's signals, "Bunkum! The whole thing's weakminded!"¹² "Bunkum," of course, is well known to have developed from a harangue delivered in the United States Congress by the Senator representing Buncombe County, North Carolina¹³; yet Galsworthy does not seem aware of

⁹ John Galsworthy, The Patrician, Devon Edition (New York, 1926), VIII, p. 29.

¹⁰ Mencken, p. 138.

¹¹ The Silver Spoon, p. 450. The ellipses are Galsworthy's.

¹² John Galsworthy, "Soames and the Flag," On Forsyte 'Change (New York, 1930), p. 269.

¹³ Thomas Pyles, Words and Ways of American English (New York, 1952), pp. 165-166.

the American origin of the word, or else he chooses twice to ignore it, an action not characteristic of the author.

He does set off an equally wide-spread Americanism in quotation marks in Over the River, his last novel. Sir Adrian Charwell writes to his niece:

Dinny, my Dear,--

Nothing doing. He either didn't, or else played "possum," but if so it was very good "possum." All the same, I wouldn't put it past him that it was "possum."¹⁴

Apparently, Galsworthy adopted some Americanisms as his own so thoroughly that he no longer considered their foreign extraction, if he ever knew of it at all, as it would seem that he must have done in the cases of "bunkum" and "hi-falutin'." One American expression, "Indian Summer," Galsworthy not only adopted but revived to popularity in its native land.¹⁵ Of this phenomenon, Mencken says,

Sometimes an Americanism that has long ceased to be a novelty in this country is suddenly taken up in England, and becomes popular almost overnight . . . Indian Summer, which goes back to Colonial days, was given a start by John Galsworthy's use of it in the title "The Indian Summer of a Forsyte" (1918) . . .¹⁶

Twelve years later, Galsworthy gives this revived Americanism to a character in Over the River, who in musing on the coming of the early spring makes an effort to decide his favorite season: "Wind's off the gorse. Another three weeks and it'll be green down there. Pick of the

¹⁴John Galsworthy, Over the River in A Modern Comedy (New York, 1929), p. 876.

¹⁵Again, he may have been indebted to William Dean Howells, whose novel Indian Summer was published in 1886.

¹⁶Mencken, p. 229.

year--this or the Indian Summer, I never know."¹⁷ There are not here the ubiquitous quotation marks to show that "Indian Summer" is not British English; but they are used in the first sentence of "Passers By," an interlude in Galsworthy's second trilogy. "In Washington, District of Columbia, the 'Fall' sun shone . . ."¹⁸ It would appear, then, that British "autumn" could properly be called "Indian Summer" but not "Fall."

Certainly Galsworthy's attitude toward America and toward American English was ameliorated during the course of his writing career as he visited this country and came to know Americans. It is unfortunate that the better he knew Americans, the worse he recorded their speech and the more frequently he introduced American characters into his works causing novels that might have ranked with his best to be marred by his faulty linguistic observations and transcriptions. The wiser course might have been to leave out American characters entirely; but a part of Galsworthy's sociological intent almost certainly was to show through his fiction the melding of the Old World with the New, the evolution of his society from insularity to internationalism. To achieve his purpose he needed characters from social classes besides his own, and these characters he simply could not portray accurately. Especially with his Americans, his failure in clear-cut characterization stemmed from his inability to make them talk as they should. He could not do what he set out to do; his intent was good, but his product was faulty.

Only a few months before his death, John Galsworthy wrote this evaluation of Dostoevsky:

¹⁷Over the River, p. 787.

¹⁸"Passers By," p. 507.

I . . . find him an interesting (and in some sort irritating) writer . . . He was very unbalanced, but his insight was deep and his fecundity remarkable. I think he will live.¹⁹

e might have written it of himself.

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