edged him into the position of an arbitrary tyrant not much distinguishable from his predecessor Caligula. Mr. Graves shows all this going on, and he makes Claudius, the tool, innocently reveal it. It is a masterpiece of oblique character-study.

Then, concurrently with this major theme, runs the tale of the rise and sudden fall of Herod Agrippa, King of Judea. Here is an oriental character, with a completely different political tradition and morality. Herod is a " scoundrel with a heart of gold," devoted to his boyhood friend Claudius, but no sooner promoted to a throne than he begins to bite the hand that fed him, plotting to build up an alliance of eastern kingdoms that shall be able to throw off the suzerainty of Rome and set him up as the long promised Messiah. His plan succeeds up to the last minute, to fall suddenly into ruins at a touch of the finger of superstition ; a touch that had been foretold in the beginning of his career. Mr. Graves tells this tale with magnificent dramatic force.

These are the two main threads. Woven across them is an intricate pattern of smaller tales and scenes. One of these is the rise of Christianity, that " cult of the joiner Joshua ben Joseph " which Claudius hardly thought worth mentioning. Claudius, ever garrulous, tells us all about the customs and excise, the squabbles with the Senate, the coinage system, the building of harbours and the water supply for Rome, the foreign policy of the Empire under his own reign and those of his predecessors, his introduction of three new letters into the alphabet, and finally of his conquest of Britain after the battle at Brentwood where he defeated Caractacus by means of unmilitary tricks. Round these events and principles move thousands of individuals ; soldiers, politicians, philosophers, merchants, engineers, wives, relatives, prostitutes, adventurers, and foreign kings and princes ; all made to live as signal human beings playing a part in this over-civilized and sophisticated ant-heap.

The general effect upon my mind is much like that made by Goethe's *Poetry and Truth*. There is the same simple wholeness, and the same intricacy of detail. The one quality shows a poet with a disciplined genius for co-ordinating phenomena into a mirror that shall reflect the noumenon behind them. The second quality shows a man quick with sensitive awareness towards immediate impression, to whom a contact is always an experience and never a mere habit. I believe that the combination of these two forces in Mr. Graves's work will make it outlast the majority of the literary output of our generation. With this rash prophecy I will end my effort to express my admiration for this simple, sensuous and passionate piece of historical evocation, which in an earlier age would have been an epic poem.

RICHARD CHURCH

## GALSWORTHY AND MR. EDWARD GARNETT

LETTERS FROM JOHN GALSWORTHY, 1900-1932. Edited with an introduction by EDWARD GARNETT. Cape. *7s. 6d.*

IT was Joseph Conrad who, in 1900, introduced John Galsworthy to Edward Garnett. " We should have met earlier," Garnett writes, " had I not confused his identity with that of a certain Arnold Goldsworthy, and therefore not accepted an opportunity given me." The meeting took place at *The Cearne*, the Garnetts' cottage on the Surrey hills, and Conrad and Galsworthy must have been among the earliest of a host of distinguished visitors there. Edward Garnett was then a young man, working, I believe, for Duckworth, but already well known for his critical shrewdness, his warm and ready sympathy with anything fresh in literature, and his witty manu-

script reports. In one of these reports, on *Jocelyn*, he had already pigeonholed Galsworthy with what was afterwards to prove inaccurate wit: "The author would never be an artist but always look at life as from the windows of a country club." Galsworthy, who saw that judgment by accident, never forgot it; and never ceased, it seems, to resent it a little, though ever so slightly. For as late as 1910 he recalls it, very gently, very apologetically, but still with injury: "I have always suffered a little from a sense of injustice at your hands—ever since I read an extract from your report on *Jocelyn* . . . I have always a little felt that you *unconsciously* grudged having to recede from that position." But this is almost the only flaw in what was for just over thirty years a perfect literary friendship, the results of which are now offered us in a collection of letters which form almost a biography for one man and a perfect testimony to the illuminating sympathy and critical genius of the other. A good many letters, not unnaturally, are missing; though Garnett, in a preface that is at once a most shrewd and sympathetic estimate of Galsworthy, has more than filled in the gaps those letters leave.

The earlier letters, both from Galsworthy to Garnett and *vice versa*, together with a few between Galsworthy and Constance Garnett, covering the years 1900-1910, are by far the most interesting and illuminating. The time was a critical one for Galsworthy: aristocratic and monied but comparatively unknown; a perfect gentleman but by no means a perfect writer. He had still to find himself, to crystallize the method he had adopted from Turgenev; to become, in short, a conscious artist. It was Garnett who helped him to do all that, and it is possible that he might never have done it, or at least have done it so well, without what he called Garnett's "unceasing benevolence," the inexhaustible critical compassion which Garnett brought to all that Galsworthy submitted to him and for which in turn Galsworthy never ceased to look until he had achieved, in his own words, "his beastly success." How hard it was to make the earnest writer see his faults may be seen from a dramatic episode concerning *The Man of Property*, covered by a long exchange of letters in 1905. As the book stands Bosinney is run over by accident in the street; as Galsworthy saw it, Bosinney committed suicide. Bosinney's act seemed to Garnett artistically indefensible and false, and he threw his whole heart into an immense effort to make Galsworthy see that and change it. A grand epistolary duel took place: Garnett soundly seconded by Mrs. Garnett, Galsworthy fighting alone, until finally the Garnetts triumphed.

There is little doubt that Galsworthy was wrong here, and Garnett right. And it was almost always so—though Garnett recognizes now that at times his methods must have been exasperating. But if Galsworthy recognized that also he never showed it. What he did show, however, and continued to show long after "his beastly success" made any recourse to Garnett's critical opinion superfluous, was his sweetness of nature, his everlasting gratitude to Garnett, and his joy in their friendship. These letters show this beyond all doubt. They show also what Garnett thought not only of Galsworthy the writer but Galsworthy the man. "To me Galsworthy stands for the best of the upper-class Englishman of his period, ineradicably English in his essential virtues and limitations, in his love of justice, in his reserve, in his amalgam of hardness and compassion, in his fair-mindedness, his caution and instinct for balance, in his poetical romanticism and sentimental leanings." And in the same way we see what Galsworthy thought of Edward Garnett. So that these letters form a living testimonial to both the artist and the critic, a charming memorial to their friendship and an invaluable fragment in the literary history of their world and ours.

H. E. BATES