

## *JUSTICE*

### Character sketch of William Falder

John Galsworthy's play *Justice* deals with the problems of the time remarkably and faithfully. The themes of his plays were taken from the problems, conflicts and clashes that he saw around him. He is very careful about the delineation of characters in his plays because he considers character as the most important element of his dramatic technique.

In *Justice* Falder is technically the hero of the play. He is the pivot around whom the whole play revolves. He is the centre of all events; the centre of attraction, the centre of pity, and the centre of our sympathy. Yet he is an unheroic hero. He does not fulfil the requirements of grand, sublime conception of the tragic hero as exemplified in Greek and Shakespearean tragedies. William Falder belongs to the common ranks of humanity.

William Falder is a young man of twenty-three. He is a junior clerk in the firm of the solicitors, James and Walte. When we first meet him, he gives us an appearance of "a pale, good-looking young man, with quick, rather scared eyes." He is a nice, pleasant-spoken young man. In the words of W.L. Phelps, "Falder, the victim, is a weak spineless young man, who is in love with a married woman, and has forged a cheque to pay their travelling expenses to a far away country..."

Falder is a very affectionate, gentle-hearted and good-natured young man who loves Ruth Honeywill sincerely and passionately. He prizes her love as his most precious possession. It is for the sake of Ruth that he suffers all miseries. On the whole he has no vice except that he loves a married woman who is ill-treated by her husband. But he loves Ruth because of her pitiable condition.

His love for Ruth Honeywill is undisputed. It is for her that he commits the crime. It is the sight of her that revives him after he completes his term of

confinement. He is prepared to lose his job rather than lose her. His love for her makes him blind to everything. For her sake, he even tries to dodge legal and moral objections. Even during his prison life, his only hope and consolation is Ruth Honeywill. When he comes out of the prison, he feels extremely nervous, lonely and helpless until he meets Ruth and finds her still sincere and affectionate. He tells Cokeson, "But meeting her – I feel a different man this morning. I've often thought the being fond of her is the best thing about me; it is sacred." When James asks him to give up Ruth, he says, "I couldn't give her up. I couldn't! Oh sir! I am all she has got to look to. And I am sure she is all I have got."

Falder's association with Ruth Honeywill reveals a few important characteristics of his nature. He is kind-hearted, pitiful, tender, ready to help the needy to the best of his powers and capacity. He develops a tendency towards recklessness and criminality. He loses balance of his mind because of Ruth's miserable condition.

We find Falder almost a broken man in the last Act. He is hated and he finds it difficult to get a job after his release from the prison. He stoops to the level of forgery again to get a job. He is arrested for the second time. But soon he ends his misery by killing himself. The fact that he commits suicide is an indication of his weakness of will.

Falder is a weak-willed character. The way in which he reacts to the prison life shows his weak will. He feels that "a day shut up in your cell thinking and brooding as I do; it's longer than a year outside; I cannot help it." During his solitary confinement in the prison cell he, at times feels like beating his head against the prison wall. He is weak and nervous all through. He does not have the courage to face the circumstances. Defending him in the court, Frome

rightly says, "He has not a strong face, but neither has a vicious face. He is just the sort of man who would easily become the prey of his emotions."

Despite his weak will, impulsive and emotional temperament, Falder is a very smart, dutiful and conscientious person. He discharges his duties in the office faithfully and with responsibility. Alteration of the cheque is his first and only irresponsible act. Before this he never did any such thing. Even after alteration and encashment of the cheque his conscience begins to revolt. He immediately realizes the mistake he has committed. He becomes so nervous that he feels like throwing away the money and flinging himself before a running bus. He wishes that the deed could be undone. But it is already too late. However, he decides to inform his employers after reaching his destination and to return all the money gradually.

Falder is a tragic figure. He is a victim of the forces of faulty systems of the society. He feels as if he has been caught in an endless web of hard circumstances from which he cannot break away.

Thus Falder is the central figure of the play. He is the hero in the sense that the main theme of the play centres round him and the tragic gloom thickens and presses round him till the last, and forces him to commit suicide. He is not the hero in the conventional sense in which Hamlet, Othello or Faustus is a hero. He is not a superhuman creature who is loftier than his fellow beings. He does not bring his fall from a very great height because of a fatal flaw in his character, nor does Fate play any role in his downfall. He is an ordinary person and his weaknesses are just as the weaknesses of common man.