

My Wood
by E. M. Forster (1879-1970)

A few years ago I wrote a book which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India. Feeling that they would have had no difficulties in India themselves, the Americans read the book freely. The more they read it the better it made them feel, and a check to the author was the result. I bought a wood with the check. It is not a large wood--it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it, by a public foot-path. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? Don't let's touch economics; the effect of private ownership upon the community as a whole is another question--a more important question, perhaps, but another one. Let's keep to psychology. If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood?

In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he stuck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle and being woven into the robe of God.

我的木材

几年前我曾写了一本书，书中谈及英国人在印度的困境。美国人觉得按上是他们的便不成问题，于是看我的书，心是理得，而且越看就越觉得坦然。结果你便收到了一笔支票。我朋友买下一片树林。树林并不大——树也没多少株，而且该死的是，林中还穿过了一条人行小径。不管怎样，这片树林是我生平第一份产业，因此，我常引以为羞愧，别人也应该来感受一下，按心自问这重要的问题（老人的声调则看他的觉得有多尴尬而定好了）：产业对人的性格有什么影响？且是别谈经济学，私有产权对社会整体的影响是另一个问题——即也许是更重要，但却完全是另一回事。我们只谈对心理的影响。你拥有一些东西，那时有何影响？我的木材对我有何影响？

首先，它令我觉得重了。它真的有这种影响。产业使人变得有份量；而有份量的人是不能进天国的。如基督因为他的像圣经喻言视不幸的财主之一样心肠要重，他不过是财主的硬而已。他随着基督后凸的身躯，在天堂无品阶的门外左摸右摸，拼命想钻进去，圆厚的脑袋也蹭破了；却看见下面一隻瘦削的骆驼，穿过针

The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness. They point out what is perfectly obvious, yet seldom realized: that if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, that furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps, and the whole tangle of them makes you think twice before you accept an invitation to dinner or go for a bathe in the Jordan. Sometimes the Gospels proceed further and say with Tolstoy that property is sinful; they approach the difficult ground of asceticism here, where I cannot follow them. But as to the immediate effects of property on people, they just show straightforward logic. It produces men of weight. Men of weight cannot, by definition, move like the lightning from the East unto the West, and the ascent of a fourteen-stone bishop into a pulpit is thus the exact antithesis of the coming of the Son of Man. My wood makes me feel heavy.

In the second place, it makes me feel it ought to be larger.

The other day I heard a twig snap in it. I was annoyed at first, for I thought that someone was blackberrying, and depreciating the value of the undergrowth. On coming nearer, I saw it was not a man who had trodden on the twig and snapped it, but a bird, and I felt pleased. My bird. The bird was not equally pleased. Ignoring the relation between us, it took flight as soon as it saw the shape of my face, and flew straight over the boundary hedge into a field, the property of Mrs. Henessy,

时，增加了上帝的重担。北顾肥胖和迟钝缓慢在圣经
寓言裡都是相提并论的。寓言的道理实在清楚不过，
但是，有許多人能明白：你的东西多了，你便不能行
动自如。傢具要打扫，打扫要僕人，僕人要买保险，
这一连串误会翻译家之恩之后才敢接受人家请吃饭，
或到约旦河洗。圣经有时更会藉把耶稣基督比作在人
间有产业就有罪。这裏涉及人能否过禁欲的生活的问
题。我虽然不明白这个问题，但若谈到产业时又有什
麼直接的影响，如逻辑便最简单明白了。产业使人重
得有份量。照字義解释，有份量的人根本不能像闪电
一闪的由东方转到西方。份量+四吨的主教要攀上祭
坛，照人子降生的对比，何其鲜明。我的树林令我觉
得重了。
其次，我总以为我的树林应该大一点。
一天，我听到林中树枝折断的声音，心中顿觉不
快，以为定是有人在摘树下的黑莓子，在作贱它的。
我走近查看，发觉折断树枝的不是人，是隻鸟，心倒
高兴起来。那是我的鸟，但她可不高兴呢，也不管我
们之间的关系，一看见我脸孔，便惊慌起来，在跨
过林边的树篱，嘎一声的落在隔邻的田畹。却是那尺

where it sat down with a loud squawk. It had become Mrs. Henessy's bird. Something seemed grossly amiss here, something that would not have occurred had the wood been larger. I could not afford to buy Mrs. Henessy out, I dared not murder her, and limitations of this sort beset me on every side. Ahab did not want that vineyard--he only needed it to round off his property, preparatory to plotting a new curve--and all the land around my wood has become necessary to me in order to round off the wood. A boundary protects. But--poor little thing--the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A little more, and then a little more, until we reach the sea. Happy Canute! Happier Alexander! And after all, why should even the world be the limit of possession? A rocket containing a Union Jack, will, it is hoped, be shortly fired at the moon. Mars. Sirius. Beyond which . . . But these immensities ended by saddening me. I could not suppose that my wood was the destined nucleus of universal dominion--it is so small and contains no mineral wealth beyond the blackberries. Nor was I comforted when Mrs. Henessy's bird took alarm for the second time and flew clean away from us all, under the belief that it belonged to itself.

In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it.

其片，的田。牠於是也變成3軒尼斯太太的鳥。我心
中滿不是味兒。我的樹林原是一英仔好3。我沒有
能力收購軒尼斯太太，也不敢把她幹掉。深如此類的
限制真夠我心煩不已。從色列巴匯哈其實最真實的要
那個葡萄園——地不過想用它來使自己的土地變得
完整，為要繪畫一條新曲線做準備工夫。要我的樹林
變得更加自成一體，它周圍的地都要是我的才行。一條
邊界線自有其保護作用。可是，唉，邊界線也要保
護的哪：周圍的喧嘩吵鬧聲不消說，小頑童也會把
石塊拋進來。向前跨一步，吧，再跨一步，吧，在村
海邊再談。北歐海峽將至！偉哉阿力山大大帝！畢竟，
地球怎能成為我們的極限，阻止我們的擴展。大家都以
為一枚火箭不久便會把英國國旗送到月球去。然後是
火星、天狼星。再然後是……可惜，蒼穹縱使廣
闊如眼，我所能擁有的却仍只是那麼一小片樹林，除
了黑莓子，便連个礦藏也沒有。轉念及此，不禁心都
灰了。軒尼斯太太的鳥忽又再憤怒起來，振翅高飛，
飛得老高的，滿以為誰也管不了。可是，我還是不能
因此而得到半英安穩。
第三是，人一旦有了產業，便常會心癢，想